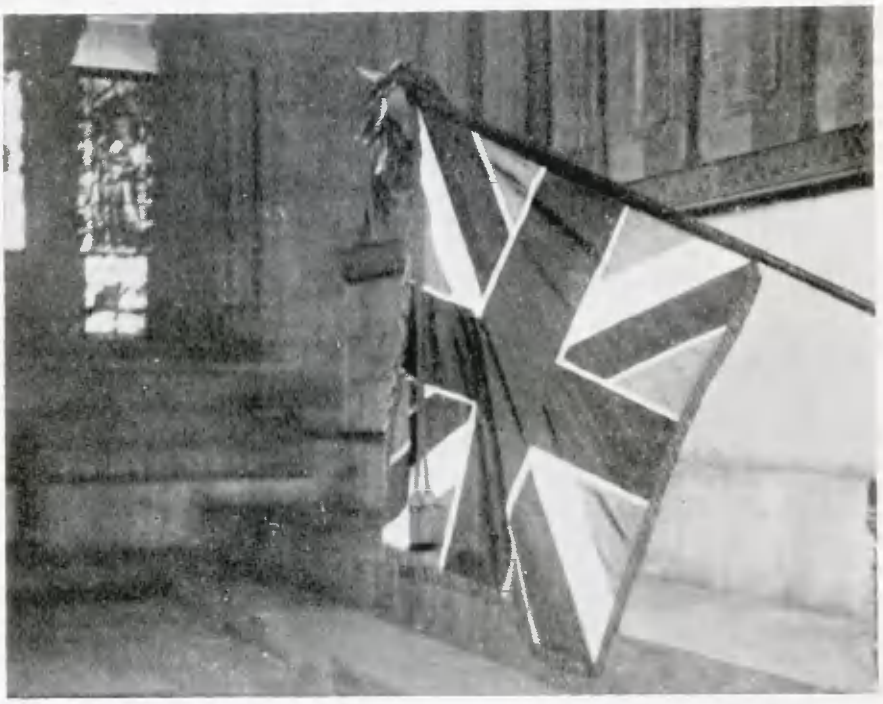

DLI

WAR HISTORY

OF THE

18TH (S.) BATTALION
DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY



THE KING'S COLOUR
OF 18th BATTALION DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY.
Laid up in the Chapter House of Durham Cathedral.

WAR HISTORY

OF THE

18TH (S.) BATTALION DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

BY

LIEUT.-COL. W. D. LOWE, D.S.O., M.C.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

LIEUT.-COL. H. BOWES, T.D.

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY

OF

THE GALLANT COMRADES

OF THE

18TH (S.) BATTALION DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

PREFACE

For the general supervision of this record I am very much indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes, T.D., who organised and commanded the Battalion for nearly two years, and to whose energy and powers o administration we all owe a debt of gratitude.

Without the assistance of Major D. E. Ince, M.C I could hardly have contemplated this task : his unfailing memory and ready help is registered on every page.

To the few who responded to the appeal for diaries and letters, and especially to the Company Commanders and to Lieutenant W. Allbeury, M.C., I am most grateful, and trust that they have, in all cases where desired, received their papers again.

All proceeds from the sale of the History, less the immediate cost of printing, binding, distribution, etc., will be handed to the Battalion fund for the relief of those who have suffered for us all.

It is difficult in this type of record to hit the happy mean between writing for the public and for the Battalion. I have not attempted to do so, and have therefore described, very probably to the weariness

of the general reader, every move of the Battalion, and for this I do not apologise. To the Battalion every place-name will recall some memories, some hopes and in too many cases some griefs. The History of the Battalion is written for the Battalion.

Lastly, no one is more aware than myself of the difficulty of compiling a record of the gallant deeds done. Very many names, as I know, are unrecorded. Turn to the long list of honours won and to the names enrolled on the record of decorations, and they are merely an insignificant minority in comparison with the numbers of those whose gallantry, singleness of heart and devotion to duty engraven in the memories of their comrades remain unrewarded, but were none the less known and honoured by their fellow-fighters.

In case a later edition should appear I should be very glad of any corrections or additions that may occur to the reader.

My sister, Miss L. A. Lowe, has helped me much by reading through the proofs.

W. D. L.

The Castle,
Durham.

FOREWORD

LITTLE is required as introduction to " The History of the 18th (S.) Battalion (1st County) The Durham Light Infantry." The circumstances under which the Battalion was raised, the vicissitudes through which it passed, and its final disbandment are all so graphically, concisely, and so humanly related that no special attention requires to be drawn to any specific incident or to the arrangement of the volume as a whole.

Typical of the men of Durham as the county regiment may be, it is safe to say that no unit of it was more thoroughly representative of the Palatinate than that dealt with herein. Drawn almost exclusively from the entire county, raised under the ægis of a County Committee, it was the first of several units similarly raised within the confines of Durham during the war. That its inception was sound is evidenced by the fact that its personnel, in the first instance, strange to training and to comradeship, the essentials to fighting, and in the absence of a single officer of the Regular Army, later supplied a very considerable proportion of its strength as commissioned officers to

fill the gaps arising from lengthened hostilities and the attendant wastage of war.

So far as can be ascertained of all units raised locally throughout the country during the war, the 18th (S.) Battalion stands out as having alone been enlisted, clothed, equipped, administered, and handed over as a free gift to the State.

Perusal of the book, an authoritative treatise and primarily compiled for those who served with the Battalion, cannot fail to interest generally those who may in any way have had a prior knowledge of the wonderful personnel from which it was enlisted, or the conditions under which the unit was raised, whilst to those who actually served with the Battalion almost every page will recall some incident, however trivial, grave or gay, and bring back to memory, restore and gild some half-forgotten billet, and may, perchance, in memory recall some erstwhile forgotten comrade.

Throughout the volume the student may with ease trace the life history of the Battalion, first in its chrysalis state, later, as organisation and training progressed and developed that comradeship and tradition so essential to its well-being, bursting forth into the strong fighting spirit which throughout its career ever characterised the Battalion and added lustre to its good name wherever it went, then during the Armistice, still keeping to the forefront by its sportsmanlike qualities, and finally returning to the county of its birth, laying up its King's Colour in the Mother Church of the Diocese, forming its Old Comrades' Association,

and thus ensuring that the comradeship and tradition developed under the strain and stress of war should be continued and enjoyed during the days of peace.

To the author we of the Battalion owe a deep debt of gratitude. That the unit created a tradition cannot be denied; such tradition has now been stabilised in this history, and no more authoritative or appropriate compiler could have been selected than its writer. From the inception of the Battalion at Cocken Hall in the early autumn of 1914 he was the life and soul of the training and administration of the unit; almost from the first its Adjutant, with all the multifarious duties pertaining to his office and permitting him to become conversant with every detail, later as Second in Command, and lastly, and deservedly so, its Commanding Officer; from beginning to end the Battalion was his, he saw it grow up and pass from success to success, and as reward for his labour of love in compiling this history all that we can offer to him is the marvellous tradition which he did so much to create, and which still exists, together with the comradeship which continues to this day amongst all those who have served together in the Battalion.

I have been asked by Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Lowe, D.S.O., M.C., to write this "Foreword." I have accepted his invitation not because I consider that I am the right and proper member of the Battalion to do so, but because in introducing the History of the 18th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, I find

the opportunity of thanking him for the help and assistance which, often under trying circumstances, he was ever ready to give, whilst I also take a last opportunity of repeating that never did a Commanding Officer proceed overseas with greater feelings of confidence, power, and support in his unit than did the Officer Commanding the 18th (S.) Battalion The Durham Light Infantry in the late autumn of 1915.

HUGH BOWES,
Lieut.-Colonel.

DURHAM,
27th May 1920.

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DIARY OF THE WAR

Western Front.

1914.

Aug. 3. Germany declared war on France.
„ 4. Great Britain declared war on Germany.
„ 15. Fall of Liège.
„ 16. British Army landed in France.

Sept. 5. End of Retreat from Mons.
„ 6. First Battle of the Marne began.
„ 15. First Battle of the Aisne began.
Oct. 9. Fall of Antwerp.
„ 20. First Battle of Ypres began.

1915.

Mar. 10. British took Neuve Chapelle.
Apr. 22. Second Battle of Ypres began. Gas used for the first time.

Other Fronts.

1914.

Aug. 26. Battle of Tannenberg began.

Nov. 1. Naval action off Coronel.
Dec. 8. Naval action off the Falklands.

1915.

Feb. 25. Allied Fleet attacked the Dardanelles.

Apr. 25. Allied landing in Gallipoli.

May 3. Battle of the Dunajec.
„ 7. Lusitania torpedoed.
„ 23. Italy declared war on Austria.
Aug. 8. General Birdwood's advance at Anzac.

Western Front.

1915.
Sept. 25. Battle of Loos and in Champagne.

1916.
Feb. 21. Battle of Verdun began.
Apr. 9. German assault at Verdun.

July 1. First Battle of the Somme began.

Nov. 13. British victory on the Ancre.

Dec. 15. French victory at Verdun.

1917.
Feb.-Mar. German retirement to the Siegfried line.

Apr. 6. America declared war on Germany.
„ 9. Battle of Vimy Ridge began.
May 4. French took Craonne.
June 7. British victory on Messines Ridge.
July 31. Third Battle of Ypres began.
Oct. 9. Allied attack in Flanders.

Nov. 1. German retreat on Chemin des Dames.
„ 6. British stormed Passchendaale Ridge.
„ 20. British victory at Cambrai.
„ 30. German counter-attack at Cambrai.

1918.
Mar. 21. German offensive in the West and Second Battle of the Somme.
„ 24. Bapaume and Peronne lost.

Other Fronts.

1915.

Sept. 28. Victory at Kut-el-Amara.

Dec. 19. Withdrawal from Gallipoli.

1916.

Apr. 29. Fall of Kut-el-Amara.
May 31. Battle of Jutland.
June 5. Lord Kitchener lost at sea.

Nov. 1. Italian advance on the Carso.

Dec. 6. Germans entered Bukarest.

1917.
Feb. 1. Unrestricted "U"-boat war began.
Mar. 11. British entered Baghdad.
Mar. 12. Revolution in Russia.

Oct. 24. Italian defeat at Caporetto.

Dec. 9. British capture Jerusalem.

1918.

DIARY OF THE WAR

Western Front.

1918.

Apr. 9. German offensive on the Lys.

May 27. Third Battle of the Aisne began.
„ 31. Germans reached the Marne.

June 9. New German assault on the Matz.

July 15. Second Battle of the Marne began.
„ 18. Foch's counter-attack.
„ 20. Germans recrossed the Marne.

Aug. 8. Third Battle of the Somme.

Sept. 2. Drocourt - Quéant line breached.
„ 12. American attack at St. Mihiel.
„ 27. Hindenburg line broken.

Oct. 9. Cambrai regained.
„ 10. Battle of Le Cateau.
„ 17. Battle of the Selle.

Nov. 1. Battle of the Sambre began.
„ 3. Kiel Mutiny.
„ 9. Abdication of the Kaiser.
„ 10. British at Mons.
„ 11. Armistice with Germany.

1919.

June 28. Peace signed.

Other Fronts.

1918.

Apr. 22. Naval raid on Zeebrugge and Ostend.

June 15. Austrian offensive in Italy.
„ 23. Great Austrian defeat.

Sept. 29. Bulgaria surrendered.

Oct. 27. Austria sued for peace.
„ 28. Italians crossed the Piave.
„ 29. Serbians reached the Danube.
„ 30. Turkey granted an Armistice.

Nov. 3. Austrians surrender.

CHAPTER I

FORMATION AND EARLY DAYS OF THE BATTALION

In the bitter days of early September 1914, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Durham, a committee of gentlemen from the County of Durham, including Colonel R. Burdon, V.D., M.P., Sir William Gray, Bart., and H. Pike Pease, M.P., agreed to raise and equip at their own expense a Battalion from the County of Durham, making special appeals to Durham, Darlington, the Hartlepools, Middlesbrough, Stockton, Sunderland and Bishop Auckland. The raising of such a Battalion was actually first mooted by Major F. T. Tristram in a letter to Colonel R. Burdon, and it was brought into being as a direct outcome of their strenuous efforts seconded by Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes and cordially supported by the Lord-Lieutenant of the County. The idea, conceived and carried into effect, was to raise and equip a Battalion in the County at the sole expense of subscribers, and it should be observed that this Battalion was the only unit in the country that was so raised, the initial expenses connected with the formation of other Battalions being refunded by the Government.

Appeals were at once made for funds for the

provision of equipment, etc., and the response amounted to upwards of £10,000. Lord Durham in addition generously offered to place Cocken Hall at the disposal of the Committee : this certainly saved the county a further expenditure of between £6000 and £7000, and without its use it would have been impossible to house the recruits who poured in rapidly directly the proposal to form a County Battalion was made public. See Appendix I. (List of Subscribers).

It is not to be supposed, however, that the formation of the Battalion was carried out at the cost of little or no trouble. As a matter of fact, the work was attended with considerable difficulty. At the outset the War Office was totally opposed to Battalions being raised in such a way, and obstacles were thrown in the way of the promoters, but Colonel R. Burdon, by dint of perseverance, eventually succeeded in obtaining official sanction to go ahead with the scheme. Curiously enough, after first strongly opposing the project, the War Office subsequently commended highly the success achieved in Durham, and Lord Kitchener summoned Colonel Burdon to London and expressed the thanks of the country to the county for having presented the nation with so fine a Battalion. Composed, as it was, of picked officers and men, the Battalion was unquestionably a unit of which any county and any country might well have been proud.

On September 24, 1914, recruits began to assemble rapidly at Cocken Hall, the Durham City and District contingent marching from the Race-course. They were soon joined by contingents from South Shields, Sunderland, Hartlepool and Darlington. From the outset a very high standard of physique was required,

the minimum height being 5 feet 9 inches; the result was that the Battalion was composed of magnificent material: similarly, the recruits were of an unusually high level of intelligence, a very great proportion being drawn from clerks, tradespeople, shop assistants, normal students, and men engaged in educational work. At the first, C. W. Tilly, Esq., who was soon promoted Major, was in charge of the recruits, but towards the close of the month Major F. T. Tristram and Captain G. C. Roberts arrived, and finally Lord Southampton of the Reserve of Officers took command as Lieutenant-Colonel.

Owing to the rapid increase in numbers additional accommodation had soon to be found, and B Company moved to billets in West Rainton and A Company shortly after to Newton Hall. At first billet life was strange to the men, but the experience of the old soldiers among them was of great value and the Companies soon settled down to the new conditions. By early October the Battalion was raised to its full establishment, and in the beginning of 1915 it was increased to six Companies, about 1300 strong. Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes took over the command about the end of October. Owing to his energetic action the Battalion was soon fully clothed, and equipment began to be issued. During the first six weeks the training had consisted largely of route-marching; this was continued and laid the foundation of the well-earned reputation of the Battalion for its fine marching powers.

Gradually the organisation of the Battalion was built up, and the transport, band and regimental employments of the Battalion came into being. One and all were most carefully selected, and it says much

for the insight of the Commanding Officer that the work of the Quartermaster's Stores, of the pioneers, shoemakers, tailors, cooks, the Sanitary and Water duties, the Regimental Police, band and transport, from the beginnings of the Battalion to its final disbandment, has been of the very highest quality, and, in the most trying circumstances, has been invaluable in promoting to the full the comfort and efficiency of the Battalion.

During October the Committee realised that the numbers would soon far exceed the accommodation at Cocken Hall, and the building of huts was rapidly taken in hand : these included housing for the men, bath and washing arrangements, and an excellent miniature range where the musketry was developed quickly to a very high standard under Lieutenant D. E. Ince, with the help of Sergeants W. Greenwell, W. L. Allen, and T. W. Pickles. The early work of these instructors had its fruit in the excellent musketry results at Ripon and Fovant. During this period squad drill and close order drill were beginning to show signs of distinct promise, and field training and entrenching were started. The catering was now taken out of the hands of the civilian caterer and undertaken by the Company cooks under Sergeant J. D. Moscrop. It would be difficult to point to any other branch of the administrative side of the Battalion which has worked harder or had more excellent results than the cooks, and every member of the Battalion appreciates the debt of gratitude owed to them.

In Sports the football team was getting together and doing well, and it was during one of their matches that the order was received to despatch

two Companies to Hartlepool. Boxing and concerts were frequently arranged, Privates R. Orde and A. Russell especially doing well in the boxing, Private C. Maughan coming to the front later in the heavy-weights. He was followed by Private R. Middleton, an excellent middle-weight who, as Sergeant, in 1919 won the Championship of Thirty-first Division and reached the Semi-Final of the Second Army at Lille, where, though suffering from a very heavy cold, he put up a fine fight against the ultimate winner.

Lieutenant-Colonel T. C. McKenzie of Sunderland had at an early date interested himself in the Battalion and presented it with the instruments for a brass band. The bandmaster, Sergeant W. L. Allen, soon formed a fine band, which, by its untiring efforts during the longest marches both in training and on active service, did much to weld the Battalion together and to lighten its work.

The Bombardment of Hartlepool and Defence Duty at Middlesbrough.—Orders were received on the afternoon of November 16 for two Companies to proceed to Hartlepool that night, and to take up Coast Defence Duty. The Commanding Officer selected the non-commissioned officers and men from those who had fired a course on an open range. These were then formed into two Companies and placed under the command of Major F. T. Tristram. The detachment entrained at Leamside [1] and proceeded to Hartlepool, where they were billeted at Hart Road. Later one Company moved to Old Hartlepool. The work consisted chiefly in pro-

[1] There was some disappointment caused by the selection, and it was unofficially reported that a considerable number of men tried to join the detachment on the way to the station.

viding guards disposed at various tactical points and places of importance along the coast and inland, together with carrying out training: the trenches on the coast were also improved.

On December 15 Colonel P. H. Hammond, who was in command of the Tyne and Tees Defences, received information from the War Office of the probability of a raid by enemy warships on the East Coast on the following day at about 8.30 A.M. The trenches were manned as usual and the rest of the detachment stood to, while a gunboat and two destroyers lay off the shore ready for action. There was a mist which allowed the enemy ships to come in close before being detected, and they used a clever ruse of firing out to sea as if they were English ships retiring and so misled the coast batteries for a few moments. In addition they used our signals correctly. The German ships, the *Derfflinger* carrying 12-inch guns, the *Von der Tann* and *Blücher* with 11-inch guns, and possibly a light cruiser in addition, came out of the mist and opened fire on the British flotilla. Our small craft gallantly tried to close and torpedo the invaders, but were very roughly handled, and the enemy ships drew near the shore and fired on the coast batteries.

'Then began the first fight on English soil with a foreign foe since the French landed in Sussex in 1690, the first on British soil since the fight at Fishguard 1797.' Most unfortunately one of the first rounds burst near one of our guards which was being relieved, and the Battalion suffered its first casualties, losing five killed and eleven wounded, of whom one died shortly after. The *Derfflinger's* 12-inch shells burst in and round the battery, which, though badly

undergunned compared with the invaders' 12-inch guns to 6-inch, replied with some effect. For forty minutes the furious cannonade continued, the enemy using some 1500 shells. During the bombardment some fishermen were bringing in their smack and tried to land on the beach. One of them was left wounded on the beach in the thick of the shelling. Sergeant W. E. Heal and Corporal M. Brewerton at once asked permission to leave the trench and under heavy fire ran down to the shore and brought him into safety. Meanwhile one ship closed in on the battery, of which the fire was unfortunately partly masked by the lighthouse, and gave it broadside after broadside ; the others moved farther north and shelled Old Hartlepool, West Hartlepool, and the docks. 'The streets of the old town suffered terribly, the gas-works were destroyed, and one of the big shipbuilding yards damaged, but the docks and other yards were not touched. Churches, hospitals, workhouses, and schools were all struck. Little children going to school and babies in their mother's arms were killed. The total death-roll was 119, and the wounded over 300 ; 600 houses were damaged or destroyed, and three steamers that night struck the mines which the invaders had laid off the shore and went down with much loss of life.'

The inhabitants behaved extremely well, and the girls in the Hartlepool Telephone Exchange worked steadily through the cannonade. 'The German aim had been to create such a panic in civilian England as would prevent the despatch of the new armies to the Continent, and to compel Sir John Jellicoe and the Grand Fleet to move the base nearer the East Coast.' Both hopes completely failed.

The behaviour of the Battalion was equally satisfactory : they had been the first Service Battalion to come under fire, and the men all displayed coolness and gallantry under heavy fire. Subsequently Lord Kitchener, General Plumer, then G.O.C. Northern Command, and Lord Durham bore testimony to their excellent behaviour and coolness, General Plumer adding that 'if the enemy had followed up the bombardment by attempting to set foot on our shores, the behaviour of the troops was such as to assure every one that they were fully prepared and would have been able to render an excellent account of themselves'.

After the Hartlepool bombardment training continued until close up to Christmas, when a large proportion went on leave. The Christmas dinners, decorations and entertainments went off very successfully. Early in the New Year, on January 12, the Hartlepool detachment rejoined the Battalion, the companies were reorganised, and hard company training was begun. Battalion close order drill and ceremonial became a very distinctive feature ; the steadiness on parade, precision of movement and accuracy of drill were most marked and were a source of pride to all those who took part in these Battalion parades. Training gradually went farther afield and Battalion schemes were carried out.

In early December the Battalion had been grouped with the 16th, 18th, 19th Battalions Northumberland Fusiliers into 122nd Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General J. G. Hunter, C.B., who, with his Brigade-Major, Captain G. N. Dyer, took a keen and personal interest in the training of the Battalion. This Brigade was part of Forty-first Division.

About the middle of April uneasiness was felt by the authorities as to the defences of Middlesbrough, and on April 21 an order was received for Headquarters and three Companies, A, B, C, to proceed to Middlesbrough. A, B and C Companies accordingly were warned and entrained that night with Headquarters. On arrival at midnight sealed orders were opened and in accordance with them an outpost line was thrown out on the east, south and south-south-west of the town, with A Company near Cargo Fleet Ironworks, C Company near Marton Bungalow, and B Company towards Marton Hall. The weather was extremely bad and there was heavy rain at night, but the Companies rapidly took up the positions detailed to them. Unfortunately the Battalion had been vaccinated during the few days previous to the move, and the exposure under very unfavourable conditions for several days delayed the recovery considerably.

On April 26, after nearly a week of outpost duty, the Battalion returned to Cocken Hall. At Middlesbrough, as at Hartlepool, the municipal authorities had done everything that lay in their power to reduce the discomfort of the men.

In less than a month the Battalion was again on the move, and, less E and F Companies (Reserve), on May 3 joined the remainder of the Brigade in a tent camp at Cramlington. While there, the weather was miserably cold, and the situation of the camp was entirely unsheltered. One night instructions were received to prepare for a Zeppelin raid ; ammunition was issued and the Battalion was standing to in a creditably short time ; the Zeppelins, however, moved south of the Tyne. A large portion of the training at Cramlington was devoted to ceremonial. After a

preliminary inspection on May 17 by G.O.C.-in-C. Northern Command, the Commanding Officer received the following message :

At the conclusion of his inspection of the Brigade to-day, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, desired the Brigadier-General Commanding to convey to all ranks in the Brigade his entire satisfaction with what he had seen, and his appreciation of the hard work of all ranks which has been instrumental in bringing the Units of the Brigade to their present state of efficiency. The Brigadier-General Commanding has much pleasure in publishing this message, and he considers that all ranks of the Brigade have combined to earn the praise of the G.O.C.-in-C.

On May 20 the Brigade marched to Newcastle and, with other North Country troops of all arms, took part in a Review before His Majesty. Lord Kitchener and the Duke of Northumberland and the Earl of Durham were present, and Major-General B. Burton, C.B., Commanding Newcastle Area, was in command of the parade. Lord Kitchener especially complimented Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes on the fine appearance and steadiness of the Battalion. The Review was held on the Town Moor, and the Battalion was credited with being one of the smartest on parade. Tyneside Scottish and Tyneside Irish Battalions also took part in the inspection.

In the latter part of May the Battalion was detached from 122nd Infantry Brigade and ordered to join 93rd Infantry Brigade at Ripon. The following letter was sent to Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes by Brigadier-General Hunter, C.B., 122nd Infantry Brigade :

On the departure of the 18th (S.) Batt. Durham L.I. the Brigadier-General Commanding wishes to place on record his appreciation of the exemplary discipline and soldier-like spirit

existent in the Battalion, and the manner in which all ranks throughout have worked unceasingly to bring themselves to a high state of efficiency for war.

On May 22 the Battalion, less E and F Companies, which joined the Second Line T.F. York and Durham Brigade, arrived at Ripon and came under the orders of Brigadier-General E. H. Molesworth, C.B., the other battalions of the Brigade being 15th, 16th, 18th Service Battalions West Yorkshire Regiment.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION AND TRAINING OF THIRTY-FIRST DIVISION

EARLY in June 1915 Thirty-first Division was formed : it was composed of 92nd Infantry Brigade, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th East Yorkshire Regiment, 93rd Infantry Brigade, 94th Infantry Brigade, 11th East Lancashire Regiment, 12th, 13th, 14th York and Lancaster Regiment, and 12th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, the Divisional Pioneer Battalion, under the command of Major-General E. Fanshawe, C.B., who a fortnight later handed over his command to Major-General Wanless O'Gowan, C.B.

During June the Regimental Transport was completed with mules up to establishment. Our Transport Officer, Lieutenant F. S. Beadon, corralled the mules for the Division as they arrived at Ripon station. They were an uncommonly fine batch of animals from South America, and rising 17 hands. At first they were very wild and intractable and created a good deal of trouble in the lines, breaking loose and careering wildly through the town. We had a beautiful team of six grey mules, almost perfectly matched and very fine animals.

Training at South Camp consisted largely of Brigade

route-marches, digging a Divisional system of trenches with day and night reliefs of working-parties, bombing, musketry on Wormald ranges, Brigade schemes and inspections, in all of which the Battalion more than held its own. The Brigade was inspected at different times by General Sir Bruce Hamilton, Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Murray, and others. The Commanding Officer was highly complimented on the physique, steadiness, and high efficiency of the Battalion.

No account of Ripon would be complete without referring to Sergeant-Major F. J. Carnell, who came to us from the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards and was at the time the senior Sergeant-Major in the Army. In addition to a fine and commanding presence he had a remarkable personality : no soldier ever forgot his powers of drill and discipline and no non-commissioned officer his powers of instruction. He had the great gift of turning out non-commissioned officers of character. His presence with the Battalion for about four months was of the greatest advantage to every officer, non-commissioned officer and man who came into contact with him.

In the first week of August the Battalion was officially taken over by the War Office, but the Committee refused to accept any refund of the original cost of raising and equipping the Battalion, about £10,000, which was thus presented as a free gift to the nation. Similarly, Lord Durham refused any compensation for the use of Cocken Hall, so saving the country the expenditure of a further £6000 to £7000.

The townspeople of Ripon showed every kindness to the men during their stay there, and by recreation

huts and supper-rooms in the town materially increased the comfort of the troops.

After about four months at Ripon, while undergoing strenuous training in very hot weather, the Division was ordered to move to Fovant. On September 19 D Company, under Captain W. G. Hutchence, proceeded ahead as advance party to the Battalion, which followed on September 23.

The camp at Fovant was at that time incomplete and the roads in and round the camp in a deplorable condition. Throughout our stay the weather was very bad, and entrenching and musketry were carried on in the most unfavourable circumstances.

In October Brigadier-General H. B. Kirk of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders took over the command of 93rd Infantry Brigade from General Molesworth. It was hoped and generally expected that the King would inspect the Division before training was concluded, but this was prevented by His Majesty's illness. About this time the Divisional, Brigade and Regimental patches were provided, ours being a patch of Durham green flannel two and a half inches long by one inch wide with a scarlet centre of one and a half inches by half an inch : one was worn on each shoulder half an inch below the shoulder-strap.

Towards the end of November certain Staff officers proceeded to France with a view to arranging for our move there and the troops were issued with P.H. anti-gas helmets. These were issued and withdrawn twice. The Thirty-second Divisional Artillery, which was farther advanced in training than our own, joined our Division on the assumption that the Division was to proceed to France on November 29. At the last moment, however, sun helmets were issued and this

at once precluded any idea of our going to France. At the beginning of December the Earl of Durham inspected the Battalion and on behalf of the County bade us good luck and good-bye.

For some weeks previous to embarkation the orderly room staff had been kept at exceptionally high pressure in weeding out men for return to munitions and in preparing embarkation rolls. They, at any rate, hailed departure from England with delight at the prospect of reduction in paper-work, but experience in Egypt and France has since taught them not to count their chickens before they are hatched.

CHAPTER III

SERVICE ABROAD IN EGYPT

On December 5 the Battalion, less regimental transport which proceeded under Lieutenant F. S. Beadon to Devonport and sailed on the *Shropshire*, left Fovant, and, carrying kit-bags to the station, entrained at Dinton for Liverpool, where on December 6 it embarked with the rest of the Brigade and 12th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry under the command of Brigadier-General H. B. Kirk on the *Empress of Britain*, a liner of about 15,000 tons. We sailed on the 7th with an escort of two destroyers.

There were in addition to the crew well over 5000 on board, and the men's quarters were very much overcrowded, and they suffered a great deal of discomfort. The food also was totally inadequate and badly prepared. To add to the general discomfort, early in the voyage every one was inoculated against cholera. Physical drill and life-belt drill could only be carried out by companies at a time owing to the crowded condition of the decks. Danger from submarines caused us to follow a very circuitous route, and in addition the ship took a zigzag course throughout the voyage. This, combined with heavy weather in the Bay of Biscay, made us take six days to reach Gibraltar,

which we passed at night in brilliant moonlight and saw faintly outlined against the sky. Gibraltar signals warned us of submarines in the neighbourhood. From the Straits we held close to the African shore until leaving it to make for Malta, passing two hospital ships on the way with their red and green lights full on.

On the second night before reaching Malta, between 11 P.M. and midnight on the night 13th-14th December when well clear of Tunis, there was a shock through the ship and the engines stopped. The troops stood to in their quarters and remained perfectly calm and quiet, and it turned out that we had collided with an empty French troopship, the *Djuradjura*, returning from Salonika, and almost cut her in two by the engine-room. She signalled the S.O.S. slowly to us, and accordingly the *Empress of Britain* stood by in dead calm and threw out flares and showed searchlights until the crew of sixty-two from the French ship, together with the wife of the French Ambassador at Athens, were taken on board. Two of the French stokers were killed in the engine-room by the collision. The Lewis gun look-out in the bows and the military officer on duty had seen the French vessel approaching three or four minutes before the accident, and the bridge was warned, but apparently neither vessel understood what the other was going to do. At about the same time as this, one of our cruisers, H.M.S. *Dublin*, was torpedoed twice, though not vitally, by a submarine about thirty miles north of us, and so we were very fortunate to escape any undesirable attentions during the incident.

The next day the sea became choppy and remained roughish until Gozo and Malta were sighted on the following morning, where H.M.S. *Terrible*, some sub-

marines and the French flagship gave us a great reception, including an impromptu rendering of 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. On reaching the harbour it was found that our bow plates had been stove in by the collision and two days would be required to repair them. General Kirk applied to Lord Methuen, the Governor of Malta, for permission for the men to visit the island. Unfortunately this was refused, and naturally the men were disappointed. They were all, however, much interested in their first view of the East, and the bum-boats brought plenty of things for sale, including fruit at a very high price, while the Maltese boys flocked in numbers to dive for pennies. While in port on December 16, the anniversary of the bombardment of Hartlepool, the officers of the Battalion gave a regimental dinner to all officers on board.

On December 17 at 6 A.M. we left Valetta, which looked beautiful in the gorgeous morning light, the strange chequer in black and white of the land fortress turrets being our first experience of the great art of camouflage. The next day about noon the look-out sighted a submarine, and early in the afternoon our 6-inch naval gun in the stern fired at her three times, but did not hit her, though she partly submerged. By this time we had crammed on maximum speed, and this combined with a lumpy sea finally shook the submarine off. Apparently two torpedoes were fired at us and we passed between them, one missing our stern very narrowly.

We now steered north-east, and some believed that our destination was Salonika. About 5 P.M. December 18 we came in sight of the snow-covered peaks of Ida and Dicte, the twin queens of the mountain range of Crete. They were thirty to forty miles away, but the

wonderfully pure air threw them up clearly, and a little later the sunset glow gave us a picture of perfect beauty. During the early hours of the following morning another submarine fired a torpedo at us and then turned tail. We got the satisfactory news later that both these submarines had been sunk the next afternoon, December 20, by a French destroyer. On 19th we passed a white boat, keel uppermost, which was possibly a decoy put out by submarines to attract a visit and to cause us to slow down.

Until reaching Alexandria the weather was beautiful and, the nights becoming hot, the men were allowed to sleep on deck on the understanding that no lights were shown. We entered the harbour at Alexandria at night (at 7.30 P.M.) on 19th, where the boom had to be opened, but received orders to proceed to Port Said for disembarkation, no one being allowed to land at Alexandria. In the morning while still in port there was a church parade, with a thanksgiving service for deliverance from danger. On December 21 we reached Port Said, and after a very slow disembarkation marched to a tent camp just outside and south of the town. While there we had some battalion and company close order drill, plenty of bathing parades including a voluntary one on Christmas Day, as the sea was very warm; and the men had a number of opportunities to go into Port Said, where some remarkable shows could be seen, though Arab Town itself was out of bounds. Unfortunately none of our Christmas supplies had arrived and, practically speaking, a Christmas dinner was out of the question, as all troops were on hard rations owing to the shortage of transport ships and the submarining of cargo- and mail-boats, the *Persia* among others being sunk, together with a

Japanese cargo-boat on 23rd about forty miles out from Port Said.

On December 28 the Battalion entrained with the rest of the Brigade in open trucks for Kantara, where we found Sikhs, Gurkhas and Bengal Lancers. Here we encamped inside the fortified perimeter of the village which lies chiefly on the east bank of the Suez Canal on the old patriarchal track from Egypt to Palestine. C and D Companies under Major C. W. Tilly marched out (January 27) to Hill 70 about six miles east of the Canal to reinforce the 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, but returned after one night, bringing an Arab spy with them. Our work at Kantara in the beginning of 1916 consisted chiefly in reconstructing the trenches, etc. which had been built by and for the Gurkhas, and in building and occupying an outer perimeter outpost line. There was also a great deal of work to be done in unloading barges and building light railway tracks out towards Hill 70. One of our subalterns came in from Hill 70 with a miscellaneous collection of Arabs and their families, goats and dogs, who had come to our lines.

On January 2 D Company was sent out on detachment to hold an outpost line well to our south-east to protect Bir Abu Raidhar east of Ballah, with the Australians on their right. On arrival there D Company began to build a new line of trenches. A portion of C Company was sent out to Hill 40, which was two-thirds of the way to Hill 70, to expedite the building of the light railway line. The signallers got into touch with both these detachments by means of a home-made heliograph. During this period a good deal of football was played, and a Kantara Derby meeting was held. Major P. G. Nevile won the all-

comers' flat race. The Mysore Lancers gave an exhibition of tent-pegging and horse lancers to music, and the tug-of-war between teams mounted on mules ridden bareback and the camel races added considerably to the humour of the meeting. At other times there was a great deal of bathing in the Canal both by company parades and voluntarily. Just before this gymkhana a strong Turkish patrol came in motor-cars within close distance of the Suez Canal, and C Company sent out a platoon to Hill 40.

In late January, in accordance with the policy of pushing troops well forward into the desert to defend the Canal instead of using the old trenches west of the Canal and leaving the Canal to defend the troops, a policy which Sir Archibald Murray, then commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, was vigorously conducting, the Battalion less C and D Companies, which were now in Kantara, moved out south-east about eight miles to Hill 108 over very soft, shifting sand. Nearly all stores and all water-tanks or *fantassies* were brought up on camels. The camels were supposed to carry 400 lb., but very few carried much more than half the load, or twenty-four gallons of water in two *fantassies*, many of which leaked and caused a very serious shortage of water. Camels, again, that were loaded up with corrugated iron on one side and timber scantling on the other, not only had an incongruous effect in the desert, but frequently a very depressing effect on the infantry escort, when the loads worked loose and fell off.

At Hill 108 the men began on the first portion of the general defensive system as laid down in Cairo. This system was as follows : revetted trenches dug in the loose sand, lined with hurdles which were

covered with grass matting or canvas to keep the sand from sifting through, were the only solution. To dig a trench which was to be ultimately five feet wide at the top, the first excavation had to be twenty-four feet wide, and the labour caused by using ordinary small General Service shovels seemed likely to be endless. Moreover, the southern winter was hot and tiring to the men though they worked in trousers only. However, by allotting tasks and allowing the men to work in regular gangs the work proceeded very rapidly, though frequently a sandstorm would half fill the trenches with loose sand in a very short time. As the trench system progressed, General Horne and General Sir Archibald Murray came to inspect the Divisional sector and spoke in high terms both of the quality and of the quantity of the work done, and the following message was received from the latter:

> I am extremely pleased with the amount of work done, and think that the officers and men are to be congratulated on their energy. I was extraordinarily struck with the cheerful way in which they work and the hard work which they had evidently put in to accomplish what they have done in such short time.

In addition to the actual protection of the Canal itself, it was essential to prevent small hostile parties from passing between the widely separated posts and, after crossing the Suez Canal, from blowing up its western bank which separated it from the Sweetwater Canal. This latter was a brackish stream which flowed into Port Said and was there sterilised. The water was then sent down the Canal in water-tank boats and was practically the only supply of fresh water for the troops. If the intervening bank was breached by an explosion the salt water of the Suez Canal would have rendered

the Sweetwater Canal useless for sterilising. To ensure that natives should not approach the Suez Canal bank undetected, the entire eastern bank was swept with logs drawn by series of camels each evening ; this smooth trail would then show clearly any footprints in the sand. Wandering coolies from time to time caused considerable alarm until the footprints were traced to them. A number of Turkish patrols pushed from time to time close up to our front line and to the market-place for the Arabs two miles to the east.

During our early days in Egypt Arab refugees, homeless and generally starving, who were being squeezed out between the British and Turkish fronts, used to attempt to enter our lines. At first this was forbidden, as it was perfectly easy for Turkish spies to enter with them, and arrangements were made to send out grain to their camps in the extensive No Man's Land. Later when they were allowed to come through our lines they would sweep up any grain even from the horse-lines or any scrap of food lying about. They were then passed farther back and housed in compounds and rationed by the British.

At Hill 108 Major C. W. Tilly first started the regimental canteen, and Sergeant W. Morgan, who was in charge, carried it on very successfully both in Egypt and France. Here again we met Turkish patrols and had an occasional Taube over our lines. There were a certain number of small deer in the desert, and one form of amusement was to try to catch the jerboa or kangaroo-rat with its bushy tail from one of the numerous warrens in the sand. The time passed quickly, and after three weeks, in the latter half of February, the Battalion was relieved by 11th East Lancashire Regiment, and after a long and very

exhausting march through loose sand reached Spit Post on the east bank of the Canal between Kantara and Tineh, where C and D Companies undertook front-line duties. Here the work was much more interesting. The ground ran out to the east in a long, irregular and narrowing spit between two of the artificial inundations by which the low-lying land was flooded, and the amount of front to be watched was reduced. About five miles east of the Canal lay our outpost line with their own supports, and working from the Canal towards this line we began to build a road and railway and to lay a water-pipe line. In addition, we much enlarged our wharf on the Canal bank. There was a coolie compound with about 400 coolies working under Arab overseers to assist in the work : on one occasion they struck and required considerable pressure to make them resume work, but they never repeated their strike. At Spit Post, as at Kantara, there were regular bathing parades, and towards the end of the time practically the whole of the Battalion could swim, many venturing as far as from Asia to Africa and back. Here Major C. W. Tilly's pet quail became as well known to the Battalion as Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cheyne's magpies later in France, but unfortunately the quail was eaten and much appreciated by a cat the night before it should have embarked for Marseilles.

At Spit Post we first heard that the preliminary warning order which had been given to prepare for departure to Mesopotamia was cancelled, and shortly after, Thirteenth Division, which had recently come from Mudros, passed Spit Post in liners *en route* for Suez, and took much of our Regimental Transport on board at Kantara, where it had remained while the Battalion

moved from place to place. At last, on February 29, we were relieved by a Scotch battalion of Fifty-second Division and went back in barges to Kantara. There we found many changes: larger wharfs, many new stores, huts and camps, more railways, some in construction, some completed, and the question of investing in Kantara building sites became almost a serious topic of discussion in the Mess. On March 2 we left Kantara and entrained for Port Said and occupied our old camp. Orders were issued to reduce kit for a move to France, and on March 5 the Battalion embarked on the Cunard liner *Ivernia*, and on 6th, as our engines had a breakdown, we sailed apart from the convoy, the ship being commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes. The Regimental Transport sailed on the *Minneapolis*, which was submarined and sunk at Malta on the return journey, March 26.

The time in Egypt had been well spent: plenty of hard work, plenty of digging, a good deal of marching in the heavy sand and a not too luxurious diet with a very limited choice, or rather supply, of refreshing drinks had combined to make the men very fit, and, generally speaking, the Battalion had learned to fend for itself, make itself comfortable and settle down quickly under new and sometimes none too promising conditions.

There were also many pleasant memories of a lighter nature—the Turkish coffee, the bathing, the queer broken English of the small native boys who cried their papers or their wares and ascribed strange stomachic properties to their oranges under the ingenious tuition of the British soldier. Nor will any one who ever saw Sandbag City, the monumental erection of one unit, with even its Rugby football goal-

posts built of sandbags in columns fifteen to twenty feet high at a time when sandbags in the desert were worth their weight in gold, forget that sight, any more than another unit will forget the day when proceeding to their football ground for a match they found criminals of a newly arrived battalion tied to and in undisputed possession of the four separate goal-posts. Rumours too of incarcerated native railway personnel who had been mistaken for Arab spies, delayed trains and held up motor-launches, tickled our ears from time to time in the absence of daily papers. It was a good time, and prepared us very gently for the more serious work ahead. While we were in Egypt General Sir Archibald Murray had reported in a despatch to the War Office that Thirty-first Division had distinguished itself conspicuously by its hard work and excellent discipline.

The voyage in the *Ivernia* was far more comfortable than the outward journey : the men were not crowded and the feeding was better. The weather, however, was bad most of the way ; still the voyage was entirely uneventful except when we passed some of the low-built, wallowing monitors that had been built for the bombardment of the Dardanelles. We waited off Malta for orders and then passed through the Straits of Messina and the beautiful narrows of Bonifacio, where we received a wireless that three submarines were active in the Gulf of Lyons. We reached Marseilles in bad weather on March 11, and concluded our voyage by running foul of a destroyer lying in the dock where we were to be berthed and by enjoying to the full the sulphurous remarks of her crew on the lineage and ancestry of our pilot.

The remnants of the Regimental Transport sailed

from Alexandria, most of the animals having been handed over in Egypt. Out of the four vessels used by the Battalion and the Transport two were sunk by torpedoes or mines, the *Empress of Britain* and the *Shropshire* surviving.

CHAPTER IV

FRANCE AND THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE SOMME BATTLE

On arrival at Marseilles, March 11, in floods of rain, D Company disembarked at 6.30 P.M. and entrained for Pont Rémy to act as advance party ; the remainder of the Battalion disembarked about 10 P.M. and entrained at once. The train journey continued until about 3 A.M. on March 14. Throughout the journey the French authorities looked after us well and supplied hot coffee with rum in it three times a day. The train was composed of the ordinary 40-hommes or 8-chevaux covered trucks and proceeded at a leisurely pace, two men who fell out of a truck round a sharp corner four miles from Orange reaching that station only a few minutes after the train.

The detraining at Pont Rémy completed about 3 A.M. on a bitter morning, the Battalion started for Citerne, a small village some twelve miles from Abbeville. The billets were very poor, and even old, disused sties and hen-houses had to be requisitioned and cleaned out. A good deal of snow fell, and the men found the bitter weather trying after the heat and sun-helmets of Egypt. Most of the training was route-marching, as the desert sand had made the feet

soft and very susceptible to the hard roads in France. After a week at Citerne ten officers and twenty-nine non-commissioned officers went up in buses to the line at Fonquevillers to gain a few days' experience in trench routine. They not only had that experience, but also the experience of a raid ; in fact, the 5th and 8th Royal Warwickshire Regiment hospitably gave them a taste of all sorts of trench life and treated them very well.

Meanwhile the Battalion began to move forward in a series of long and exhausting marches. The rain was incessant and mixed with sleet, but day after day the spirit and resolution of the men asserted themselves and the Battalion marched in nightly without a straggler. The greatest possible credit was due to the band, which, under the most adverse circumstances and on roads which were trying even for men to walk along singly, played almost continuously and with spirit to the very end of each day's march. The first day was a long trek through Hallencourt to Longpré, where the billets were good ; then followed two heart-breaking days to Flesselles, where the party for instruction in the trenches joined us in a snowstorm, and to Beauquesne, later to be Sir Douglas Haig's advanced Headquarters for the Somme battle a few months afterwards, and finally to Beaussart *via* Louvencourt, the last portion of this day's march being done at night to avoid detection by enemy aircraft. 10th Royal Irish Rifles welcomed us by sending out their band to play us into billets.

On the following day, March 29, the Battalion suffered its first casualty overseas, an enemy aeroplane coming over and dropping a bomb presumably at two 9.2 howitzers at the west end of the village ; one of

our men was killed by a splinter. The same morning the Commanding Officer and Adjutant went up to the line in the White City sector north-west of Beaumont Hamel to arrange for taking over from 9th Royal Irish Rifles, and in the early evening the Battalion marched up through Mailly Maillet and Auchonvillers in a snowstorm and carried out the relief very rapidly. Captain W. G. Hutchence was wounded by a rifle bullet shortly after the relief while visiting an advanced post. In spite of every precaution to prevent the arrival of a new Division in the sector being known, the Boche put up a notice-board with our Brigade patch painted in colours on it, and followed this up in a day or two with exhibiting a large notice, 'Kut Taken. Many Prisoners'. There was no particular incident during this tour. The trenches were badly water-logged and caving in, and the German trench mortars unpleasant. The 94th Infantry Brigade was on our left, 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on our right. The most noticeable feature of the tour was the rapidity with which our snipers under Lieutenant H. W. Hawdon got the upper hand of the German snipers, and any one who lived in the Redan or passed along Maxim Street South must have been grateful to them.

On April 3 the Battalion was relieved by 12th York and Lancaster Regiment and moved into billets at Beaussart, and on April 4 into a cold and depressing hut camp in the wood at Bus-les-Artois. Our huts had no windows, no doors in the doorways, no floors and no furniture of any description. Here we entered on a period of training for a fortnight, passed through gas chambers, threw bombs, fired rifle-grenades and watched the Light Trench Mortar Battery carrying out

terrifying and dangerous entertainments with their Stokes mortars.

On April 20 every one was glad to leave the dripping wood and take over our old trenches from 18th West Yorkshire Regiment. This tour our patrols began to operate actively for superiority in No Man's Land and did creditable work, while the enemy on his side was more active with trench mortars. The weather was much better and good progress was made in improving the line. After an explosion in one of our mines in the Redan excellent rescue work in spite of smoke damp was done by Private W. J. Warwick of B Company. On April 24 the Battalion was relieved in just over thirty minutes by 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, all arrangements being very carefully cut and dried beforehand, and we moved into support at Colincamps and on April 28 into reserve at Bertrancourt, where there was a very fair hutment camp. At this time in our area the enemy aeroplane activity was slight, and there was no night bombing, very little long-range shelling and none of the anxieties of the later billet life in the war; the weather was improving, and the training, though strenuous in the morning, was interesting as a preparation for the coming operations.

On May 14 the Battalion took over a new sector lying just north of the Serre-Colincamps road from 11th East Yorkshire Regiment, a Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers being on our right in our former sector and 16th West Yorkshire Regiment on our left. Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes was in command of the Brigade, as General H. B. Kirk was sick. The latter, to the genuine regret of the whole Brigade, who one and all were very fond of him, died shortly after-

wards of meningitis, and General J. D. Ingles of the Devonshire Regiment took command of the Brigade.

During this tour we were in very inferior trenches, which were completely commanded by the dominating heights of Serre with the mysterious Quadrilateral lying just in front of us. From the Quadrilateral persistent sniping and trench mortar fire were maintained ; the latter came from roving trench mortars which were most difficult to locate. Towards the end of the tour we came under our first heavy German barrage : the raid was on the left of us, but the barrage was intended to prevent any co-operation on our part. It was, however, unsuccessful, but our trenches were badly damaged and there were several casualties, yet we had had the gratification of realising for the first time the marvellous efficiency and high standard of our Divisional Artillery.

One incident relieved the monotony of trench life. We received our first basket of pigeons. Some of the Higher Staff being anxious to see that their release, etc. was carried out properly, visited Battalion Headquarters to observe the results. Unfortunately those in charge of the pigeon-loft some miles in rear did not then know all there was to know about pigeons, and instead of sending two cock or two hen pigeons, sent one of each. On their release with the messages clipped on their wings, the amative couple, disregarding their military duties entirely, proceeded to fly over to Serre and, lighting on an old ruin, perched there, billing and cooing, wholly oblivious of business. Whether they ever were pricked by conscience and returned to their own pigeon-loft is unknown, as the Staff lost patience and went home to tea.

On May 19 we were relieved by 18th West

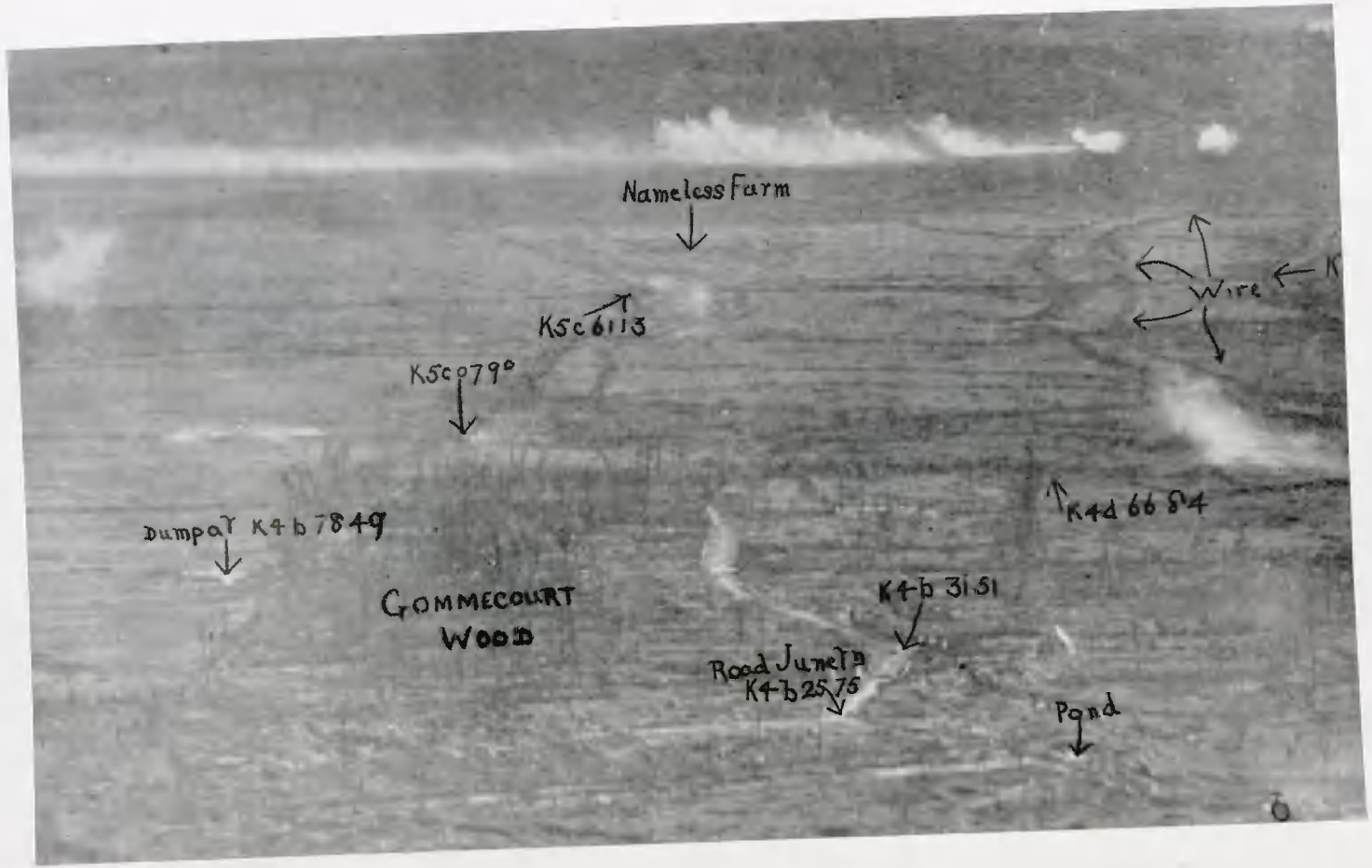
Yorkshire Regiment and moved to Colincamps. This village was now becoming unhealthy; Boche aeroplanes were active and visited us frequently but only for observation, while anti-aircraft guns of both sides were equally dangerous, though usually the infantry preferred German anti-aircraft shells which were high explosive and burst into small fragments, while ours were shrapnel and, whether duds or empty cases, were equally unpleasant for the earth-dweller. The enemy also started to shell Colincamps freely, several 5.9's dropping just in front of Headquarters billet and one destroying D Company's cooker. Brigade Headquarters was blown in, a few days later.

On May 24 we were moved back into camp in Warnimont Wood near Bus-les-Artois and did not go up to hold the line again until we moved up on the morning of June 30. During this period there were endless working parties up the line, digging assembly trenches for the attack and buried cable trenches, building mined dug-outs and aid-posts, and carrying out all the thousand-and-one tasks necessary to the success of a great assault. In many cases the Battalion had to march at night seven miles to its task often under heavy fire, carry out the task under fire, and return seven miles under fire. What the troops endured, they only can know who did it night after night, and they never say—just, after it is all over, 'A bit rough last night', or 'Jerry's got the wind up'—and all the time the casualty list grows longer.

During off-days from working parties the trench-to-trench attack was practised over taped or flagged trenches by Companies, Battalions and Brigades. Officers and non-commissioned officers were taken

over small models on the ground and visited plastic clay models beautifully made. Parties visited observation posts in the line, and everything was done to ensure that each man should have an accurate knowledge of the ground, and an exact knowledge of his particular job. In this work, as also in sniping and observation work generally in the line, the telescopes and field-glasses, so generously given or lent by friends at home, were of inestimable value both for peaceful observation of the ground and for the location and disposal of German snipers, thereby reducing our own casualties. While we were so engaged Sir Douglas Haig visited the Battalion and spoke warmly of its fine appearance, and congratulated the Commanding Officer on its high reputation.

On June 4 the Battalion moved forward to Courcelles, where, owing to shelling, trenches for bombardment cover had to be dug outside the village, and in these we lived more or less continuously. At the same time a beginning was made of evacuating the French civilians, who, especially the farmers, still remained at work. On June 20, D Company left for Gézaincourt to join 16th West Yorkshire Regiment, to whom they were to be attached for the attack on July 1, it being intended to give the battalions forming the leading waves a week of special training in the back area. Meanwhile the Battalion bombers at Courcelles practised the making and use of Bangalore torpedoes. These are long iron pipes filled with ammonal and fitted with a detonator. They explode laterally and vertically upwards, very slightly downwards and not at all backwards or forwards, and are most useful in destroying wire entanglements uncut by a bombardment. The chief essential is close


Nameless Farm
K5c 6113
K5c 0790
Wire
K
K4d 6654
Dump at K4b 7849
GOMMECOURT
WOOD
K4b 3151
Road Junct
K4b 2575
Pond
6

Taken from Balloon.

GOMMECOURT WOOD AND SALIENT WITH THE SMOKE OF OUR BARRAGE EAST OF NAMELESS FARM.

The strong front German line on the fringe of the wood and the belts of wire west of the barrage are clearly seen. The map references are mostly to German strong points, dumps, road junctions, etc.

packing of the ammonal, and the main disadvantage their unwieldiness for carrying.

By this time the whole countryside was stiff with high-velocity guns from the naval 6-inch and vicious 60-pounder to the 18-pounder; with howitzers from the corpulent 15-inch to the snub-nosed 4.5; and with 9.2's, 8-inch and 6-inch where there was room to spare. Naturally all these had to be hidden, and a bird's-eye view of the country gave one the impression of a series of large mottled tortoises sprinkled freely about. The most varied designs of camouflage on gun, carriage, wheels and tarpaulin covers were to be seen, and all credit is due to our airmen who kept the enemy aeroplanes at such a height that these strange objects were not spotted.

During the latter days of June the heavy bombardment of German trenches and wire went on systematically, assisted by observation from our balloons and 'planes, and every day thick clouds of our cylinder gas could be seen rolling greasily over the enemy's line. Unfortunately the weather during the last week in June was so bad that Zero day, originally fixed for June 29, was put back to July 1, and most unfortunately for Thirty-first Division, as afterwards was learnt from German prisoners and documents, the enemy gun-power round Serre, Puisieux and Gommecourt being very heavily strengthened by numerous reinforcing batteries of 3-inch and 5.9's during the last two days of June. Most of these batteries were wisely kept silent by the enemy until the morning of July 1.

Prior to the end of the month Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, Commanding Eighth Corps, addressed the Brigade and pointed out that it was

to act as the spearhead to penetrate through and beyond Serre and form a breach through which reserve troops were to push forward, while 94th Infantry Brigade formed a left defensive flank for the Division, 92nd Infantry Brigade being held in Divisional Reserve. On our right, Fourth Division with Twenty-ninth Division to their south were to envelop and capture the high ground south of Pendant Copse and Beaumont Hamel itself.

During the last few days of the month the assembly trenches for the Battalion were extended and the overland track avoiding Colincamps reconnoitred, marked and cleared of obstacles. The preparations were now complete for the longest battle ever known, and the Battalion was looking forward with cheerfulness and confidence to success.

CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 1916

On June 30 at 8.45 P.M. D Company followed 16th West Yorkshire Regiment up to the line, and at 10.15 P.M. the Battalion less D Company left Courcelles, and moving north of Colincamps, which was now blazing, after many checks and delays reached the assembly trench, Maitland, and settled down by 4.50 A.M. on the morning of July 1, rather glad of a rest after the slow and tiring march up.

The Division was disposed as follows: 94th Infantry Brigade on the left, 93rd on the right, 92nd in reserve. The dispositions of 93rd Infantry Brigade placed D Company on the extreme right in touch with 2nd West Ridings, 16th West Yorkshire Regiment in centre, 15th and 18th West Yorkshires respectively on the left and in support, our Battalion less D Company being in reserve. Immediately on reaching our assembly trenches special bombing parties, under 2nd Lieutenant J. B. Bradford, went forward to report to 15th West Yorkshire Regiment at Sap A, one of the advanced Russian saps with T-heads, in which 93rd Light Trench Mortar Battery had placed their Stokes mortars.

About 6 A.M. the enemy guns appeared to be inferior to our artillery, and our aircraft patrolled our lines, No Man's Land and the German trenches with clear superiority. At 7.20 A.M. the great mine at Beaumont Hamel, which had taken many months to construct and was charged with 15,000 lb. of ammonal, was sprung, and a stupendous mushroom of smoke and debris was flung high into the air. Then for the last ten minutes before Zero, at 7.30 A.M., our guns redoubled their efforts and crashed out a tornado of living steel; but the same explosion warned the Boche that Zero was at hand, and with one roar their guns broke out into a triple fire-curtain on our front line, supports and reserve, hurling a deadly avalanche of shells up to the highest calibre; their masked batteries opened, and with absolute accuracy of aim poured hell and destruction on to our trenches, crowded with men who were now on the point of climbing out. Our front line trenches, Russian saps and advanced communication trenches literally disappeared, and with them the major portion of the two leading Battalions and D Company. A few of our men broke past our wire, fewer still crossed No Man's Land, and only a mere handful reached the German lines. Some of D Company struggled on and vanished into Pendant Copse and were never seen again, and a very few stumbled up the heights of Serre; and these stout hearts now lie buried there. As one of the prominent war-correspondents, in what he termed 'The Gommecourt Epic', said: 'Heroism could go no further. Our men died; and in dying held in front enough German guns to have altered the fate of our principal and our most successful advance on the south. They died undefeated and won as

great a victory in spirit and in fact as English history, or any other history, will ever chronicle.'

Meanwhile the hostile trenches could be seen thick with men, who, immediately the barrage had lifted and passed beyond them, stood breast-high to repel our assault. Every effort was made to get our guns to shorten their range again, but it was impossible to check the advance and programme of the barrage, now well beyond our few who had struggled on, the remainder of the troops being mown down in swathes as they lay in the open and stood in the trenches. The ferocity and volume of the Boche batteries was as overwhelming as it had been unexpected. The troops on our left made slightly more progress along the sheltered valley north-west of Serre, but the left of Fourth Division on our right, faced with the same glacis as ourselves, could not get forward. About this time very heavy casualties began to pour in from the whole Brigade, and also from flank units, to our Regimental Aid Post, where Lieutenant J. W. Macfarlane, R.A.M.C., who had been recently attached to the Battalion, with his medical orderly and staff, did heroic work in spite of devilish fire; above all, the stretcher-bearers distinguished themselves, many unfortunately without recognition, as they did not reveal what they themselves had done, and there was no other witness to tell the story of their bravery and devotion.

At 9.20 A.M. the Battalion was ordered to move forward to Monk trench to support 18th West Yorkshire Regiment. A Company moved up at 9.47 A.M., B Company at 10 A.M.: the delay was due to the depth of the trench and the destruction of the ladders by shell fire. Between 10 A.M. and

11 A.M. A and B Companies were violently shelled between Maitland and Monk and lost heavily, the German artillery now predominating and being most deadly, though some of our Divisional Artillery, just west of Sackville, did magnificent work to support our second advances ; our 18-pounders were most manfully and efficiently handled throughout the day.

At 12.30 P.M. the Brigadier personally ordered Captain D. E. Ince to reorganise B Company, which was then in the open west of Monk, and to hold Sackville in conjunction with troops from Fourth Division, who also held Legend, as he suspected that the enemy were on the point of delivering a counter-attack. Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes, however, reported to Brigade that Monk, Languard and Dunmow were still tenable, and undertook to reorganise the troops there, as the Commanding Officers of 16th and 18th West Yorkshire Regiment had been killed and the Commanding Officer of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment was badly wounded. He was instructed by Brigade to carry out his proposal. Ultimately by nightfall, after varying phases, C Company manned what was to be found of the front line, or, more probably, a new assembly trench, Leeds, dug immediately in rear of it ; a company of 11th East Yorkshire Regiment in Languard was sent up to reinforce the Brigade. Remnants of 18th West Yorkshire Regiment were in New Dunmow, the survivors of 16th West Yorkshire Regiment in Old Dunmow, together with a few men of 15th West Yorkshires in Maitland ; all three Battalions had suffered appalling losses in their exposure to the inferno of fire. A and B Companies of our Battalion

were in Maitland; of D Company only 10 men had survived.

At 6.30 P.M. Major C. W. Tilly reported at Headquarters, and later about sixty first reinforcements arrived. C Company now reported the front line to have been blown out of existence as a fighting trench and piled high with casualties. B Company relieved C Company in the front line at 1 A.M. July 2. The latter moved back to Old Monk, where four machine-guns of 93rd Machine-Gun Company were placed, two more being in Dunmow.

About 1.30 P.M. on Sunday we received instructions to hold the front line with one company and four Lewis guns by day, and with two companies and eight Lewis guns by night, the remainder of the Battalion and Headquarters moving up into north and south Monk. This was completed by 2.40 P.M. From 3 to 3.30 P.M. and 6.30 to 7 P.M. special bombardments were carried out by our artillery to mask a minor operation to the south. This drew heavy retaliation on C Company, who lost two officers wounded and a considerable number of other ranks. The enemy used a good deal of gas-shell during the following nights. On the night 2nd-3rd July, C Company collected over 40 casualties of West Yorkshires, and every night rescue-work of wounded and burial of dead continued, 12th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry coming up to assist, as the hot and wet weather rendered it essential to clear the battlefield as soon as was possible. The front line had also to be wired in, at least in front of the posts.

On the early morning of July 3, Forty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Divisions were ordered to attack from the river Ancre north towards Serre at 3.30 A.M.

Our Divisional Artillery co-operated, and the enemy retaliated heavily on our line with high explosive and tear-shells. Our ration-carrying parties, which had arrived early on the morning of 4th, and included the Band, were ordered to remain in the line as reinforcements against an expected enemy operation, and at 4.3 A.M. a heavy hostile barrage opened on our front line, then lifted west to Monk and Maitland and then back to Monk. Meanwhile 94th Infantry Brigade on our left were gassed, and 12th Infantry Brigade on our right reported gas. At 4.23 A.M. our guns opened with counter-battery fire, and at about 4.40 A.M. the enemy's fire weakened. During the same morning Lieutenant H. W. Tait, who had been lying out in No Man's Land since the early morning of July 1, was brought in, largely through the instrumentality of Sergeant Cross.

At 11 A.M. of the same day information was received that a battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment of 144th Infantry Brigade would relieve us on the night 4th-5th July, and that we were to move to Louvencourt and thence to Bernaville area, joining Second Corps and coming into G.H.Q. Reserve. By 10 P.M. the relief was complete, and by 5 A.M. on 5th our weary Battalion was at Louvencourt. Our losses were, 12 officers and nearly 60 per cent other ranks, out of the total of 789 all ranks with which we had gone up on June 30. The losses of the Brigade were about 2000.

On July 6 the Battalion cleaned up, and the Corps Commander again spoke to the Battalion and thanked them heartily for their tenacity during their ordeal in the line. See Appendix II. (1).

On 7th the Brigade moved to Fienvillers, the

Battalion proceeding further to the delightful village of Berneuil, where one day's rest was most thoroughly enjoyed. From there at 9 P.M. on the following evening we moved to Conteville, and after a cold bivouac on the roadside entrained at 5 A.M. on 9th for Berguette and joined the First Army. After detraining and getting coffee and a biscuit at the Y.M.C.A. we marched to an attractive village, La Pierrière, a few kilometres north of Busnes. Here billets, though rather crowded, were very comfortable, and the inhabitants most friendly. During the week of rest large drafts arrived and were absorbed, companies were reorganised, and D Company, which had been nearly wiped out, was reinforced with officers and non-commissioned officers from the other companies to form a cadre on which to rebuild. The enemy's aircraft was active at night and bombed the mine-heads of Berguette and ironworks to the north; and from this time onward, whenever the Battalion moved into new billets, bombardment-cover trenches had to be arranged for by the companies, and all men notified of their location before nightfall. On July 15 the Battalion vacated billets at La Pierrière, which we were sorry to leave, and had a long, dusty and sultry march over very inferior roads to La Fosse. Here billets were poor, but these were gradually improved. Solid training was started again, including bomb-throwing, bombing tactics and musketry, especially for the late reinforcements.

During the week General Sir Charles Monro, G.O.C. First Army, reviewed the Brigade at Lestrem and welcomed us to the First Army, and on July 25 Lieut.-General Sir R. C. B. Haking, commanding Ninth Corps, spoke to all officers of the Brigade, laying

great stress on the value of incessant raids to wear down the enemy's morale, pointing out in a humorous way that the truest value was to be obtained not by the Corps Commander ordering a raid to be carried out, but by a Platoon Commander, after thoroughly reconnoitring and selecting a piece of his sector, volunteering to organise and lead a raiding party over ground well known to them all. He ended by saying that in view of the hardships on the Somme he hoped to be able to give us a little more rest before we went up to the line. However, the next morning sudden orders were received to prepare to relieve the Battalion holding the Neuve Chapelle sector. As it was possible to carry out the relief by day we marched out of La Fosse at 8 A.M. July 27, and relieved 14th York and Lancaster Regiment by about mid-day. Here for the first time we had to deal with breastworks in place of trenches, and very inferior we found them, as they were difficult to maintain and liable to flood.

During the early part of the evening the enemy opened out a heavy bombardment, especially of heavy trench mortars, of which we found a base plate measuring 9 inches in diameter, and a long stretch of nearly 100 yards of the breastwork was virtually torn away ; this bombardment ceased about 7.30 P.M. The Battalion was well settled down in its new sector, and the runners had learned the routes to the companies, when at 9.30 P.M. a furious bombardment opened on our front and, to our right, over the front of 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, 2nd/5th Gloucester Regiment on our left receiving only the fringe of the fire. The zone of the enemy fire included the front line trench, where complete breaches were blown in the

breastworks, the support line slightly and the communicators everywhere : these last were, one and all, blown in and impossible to use : all wires went immediately. Heavy trench mortars and 5.9's were directed especially on the front line breastworks. Information could only be obtained by runners avoiding communicators and going over the top through the confusing ruins of Neuve Chapelle. At 10.25 P.M. B Company in the centre reported the enemy to be in our front line, but after a sharp struggle of less than five minutes he was ejected, leaving one of his officers and several of his men dead in our trenches. Captain D. E. Ince and B Company especially distinguished themselves ; Corporal M. R. Pinkney of the same Company shot with his revolver the German officer and a man following behind him, then hearing a scuffle in his rear, turned round and shot another, driving off the remainder. About the same time Lance-Sergeant F. G. Allison, who was in charge of the C Company Lewis Guns on the left flank, had the target of a lifetime : a large party of about 50 Boche were mounting the breastwork to his flank ; he enfiladed them direct at point-blank range with his gun and accounted for 39 of them, the remainder jumped down into our trench, but were at once thrown out. At 10.45 P.M. the unit on our right reported the enemy in his line between Hun Street and Oxford Street, and that a counter-attack was being prepared at 11.15 P.M. to eject them. A Company was ordered to co-operate in this counter-attack. At 11 P.M. Hush Hall, the Battalion bomb-store, was in flames, but the Battalion bombers, under Corporal E. Myers, in spite of the danger managed to extinguish it amid a hail of shrapnel ;

the enemy's high explosive again fired the store, and the bombers again succeeded in putting the fire out. Meanwhile A Company on the right was heavily shelled, and the breastworks, especially at the Neb, were torn and breached. Shelling ceased at 1.30 A.M. The chief damage done was in the centre and left centre, where the breastworks were levelled in places, and several dug-outs set on fire: as far as possible the breastworks were built up before dawn, but the whole line required extensive repairs. After this success the Australians near us gave us the nick-name 'The White Ghurkas'. The Ghurkas had fought at Neuve Chapelle and in Biez Wood to the east. See Appendix II. (2).

A Boche prisoner, captured by us in the ruins of Neuve Chapelle with an elaborate telephone apparatus, stated that one and a half battalions had taken part in the raid, or rather minor operation, and that the intention had been to stay and form a salient in our line. Our total casualties were 79; more than 80 German dead alone were counted in and in front of our line, apart from those further out in No Man's Land and accounted for by our guns. Enemy casualties were estimated at approximately 200. Among these dead were found instances of saw bayonets with jagged edges, and bullets with filed and split noses both in rifle magazines and cartridge pouches. At this time our artillery was limited to ten rounds a week per battery, but during this raid, as usual, they gave us the most effective support. Shortly after, however, the shortage grew almost worse, owing to the destruction by enemy bombs of the huge ammunition dump at Audruicq.

The rest of this tour was quiet and devoted to

clearing the trenches and No Man's Land of casualties. One day a French civilian came to Headquarters to ask permission to dig in the ruins of Neuve Chapelle for a strong-box of papers buried there by him during the German advance in 1914. His search was successful. The feelings of the Sappers and working parties who had dug a trench within five yards of this treasure-trove, when they heard what they had missed, can only be vaguely and quite inadequately imagined. Similar cases happened at Vimy and again at Willerval in late 1917. At the latter place, the trail of an 18-pounder actually had to be moved, and to the disgust of the R.F.A. the French civilian found a hoard of francs which he had buried just under the surface of the ground, and which lay immediately below the spade of the gun. A noticeable feature of Neuve Chapelle amid the destruction and levelled ruins, in the heart of the village, was a lofty crucifix still practically undamaged, the only sign of peace in the scene of havoc and desolation.

CHAPTER VI

FESTUBERT, NEUVE CHAPELLE, AND GIVENCHY

On August 4 we were relieved by 14th York and Lancaster Regiment and moved back to La Fosse. On 7th a draft of fifty reported. On the following day Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes handed over the command of the Battalion to Lieut.-Colonel R. E. Cheyne, and after nearly two years' command returned to England, accompanied by the best wishes of the Battalion for which he had worked so long and felt such affection.

On August 9 we left La Fosse and after a long and dusty march moved into very poor billets at Le Hamel and Essars, and thence the following day into the line east of Festubert, with a battalion of the Hampshire Regiment on our right and 16th West Yorkshire Regiment on our left. If we had thought the line at Neuve Chapelle was bad, we found this sector far worse : the front and close support lines consisted of island breastworks, or small disconnected posts at considerable intervals, very low, in very bad repair and with hardly any communication from island to island, unless one crawled on hands and knees along a gutter about 1½ feet deep. The communicators were also falling to pieces and consisted

of sandbags rotten with age, and in many places merely of latrine canvas sagging badly on posts, and not always providing even cover from view. The Reserve line (Old British Line) was good. The condition of the front line may be judged from the fact that three shots from an enemy sniper brought down a considerable portion of the sand-bagged parapet.

There was a portion of the German line opposite us which jutted out into a sharp salient known as the Pope's Nose. From this point he kept up a perpetual harassing fire of rifle-grenades; in retaliation the salient was 'strafed' with Stokes and rifle-grenades. This only increased the enemy fire; accordingly, a general retaliatory bombardment was arranged for 2.45 P.M. on 15th, and, in view of the known accuracy of the German ranging and the weakness of our breastworks, nearly all troops were withdrawn to old overgrown and disused trenches in rear of their respective lines. On the opening of our 4.5 howitzers, 18-pounders and trench mortars the enemy replied quickly on the front line, more heavily on the close support trenches, George and Cover, and with good effect on the Old British Line and Battalion Headquarters, blowing in several bays and dug-outs there. No. 11 Island was blown in and Barnton East damaged, but, owing to the withdrawal of our troops, we only had three casualties. On August 17, six willow trees in No Man's Land, believed to be used by enemy snipers and perhaps also as a ranging mark, were blown up by mobile charges, and later in the day the programme of August 15 was repeated with the same precautions. The Boche replied with thirty minutes' 'hate'. After the demolition of these willow trees the Boche fired a dud bomb into the trenches adjoining

ours on the right, with a label on which was written in English: 'We are Saxons and are fed up with the war: we won't shoot if you won't.' Unluckily these peaceful overtures were nipped in the bud, as a bombardment of their trenches had already been arranged for.

During most of this tour there were repeated bursts of heavy fire on Givenchy Ridge just south of us, which we watched with some interest and unconcern: we did not suspect then that an early sideslip to that lively and undesirable sector was to be our lot. On this occasion in the line the enemy anti-aircraft guns got a direct hit on the observer's seat just behind the engine of a B.E.2 c. The aeroplane burst into flames and corkscrewed down behind D Company at Barnton T. Both pilot and observer were killed.

On August 18 the Battalion less B Company, which remained in the line, was relieved by 15th West Yorkshire Regiment and marched into very comfortable billets at Le Touret. On 20th there was heavy and increasing hostile fire all day, extending into the billeting areas in rear and causing our Brigade Headquarters staff to take precipitate flight into the fields together with their papers. This enemy activity was not reduced by our artillery fire. Accordingly, in the evening B Company sent up two platoons to reinforce the front line, and under orders from Brigade the Battalion stood to from 8 P.M. to 11.30 P.M. At 8.40 P.M. a strong German raiding party was repulsed with heavy loss between No. 9 and 12 Islands; the Islands were badly damaged. On 22nd, C Company relieved B Company in Old British Line; the latter joined the Battalion in Le Touret. On 26th we relieved 15th West Yorkshire

Regiment, having 2nd Yorkshire Regiment on our right and 16th West Yorkshire Regiment on our left. Early on 29th our heavies bombarded the craters to the south for thirty-five minutes, and at 3 P.M. there was a heavy bombardment on both sides of the Ridge. The remaining days were very quiet, and the general improvement of the Islands and linking up of the front line by a traffic trench proceeded rapidly. On September 1 the Battalion less D Company, which remained in Old British Line, was relieved by 15th West Yorkshire Regiment and returned to Le Touret, but found the village spoiled by the arrival and ear-splitting activity of a 6-inch Naval Gun Battery which had come up for long-range work on La Bassée and Illies; two days later, however, we moved back to the peace and comfort of La Fosse, D Company from the Old British Line rejoining us the following day.

For the next week a considerable amount of time was devoted to training a raiding party for the next tour and to reconnoitring overland routes for reinforcing the Festubert sector. On September 11 we relieved 13th York and Lancaster Regiment in our Old Neuve Chapelle sector with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on the right and 2nd/1st Buckinghamshire Regiment of 61st Division on our left. Our horse lines were again near Lestrem. The whole tour was quiet but very wet and cold. Active patrolling was done by our left Company with a view to finding gaps in the German wire, which was extraordinarily strong, high and thick. The raid was to take place on the last night in, but we were unexpectedly relieved by 2nd/6th Gloucestershire Regiment side-slipping south, and 7th Worcestershire

Regiment side-slipping north, and after a complicated but speedy relief we moved into very indifferent billets at Vieille Chapelle on night 16th-17th September. Next day we embussed (a new war-word on the analogy of entrain) and reached Gorre, and marched thence into support on the Village line east of Givenchy, taking over from 18th Liverpool Regiment. Our duty was to man and hold a line of strong points, from right to left, Pont Fixe south and north, Hilder's Redoubt, Givenchy Keep on the site of the ruined church, Herts Redoubt, Moat Farm, Windy Corner and Le Plantin, and to provide working parties. The following day B Company took over Orchard Keep, behind which lay a motor machine-gun detachment. The general policy was to hold this chequer system of strong points, in case the enemy broke through the very ragged and crater-torn front line, and by mutual support to break up any advance and then counter-attack, as our retention of Givenchy Ridge was all-important for denying the enemy complete observation and command of the low-lying ground to the west. The value of this system fully proved itself when it broke up the great German assault in March 1918, and the strong points, though at first passed and surrounded, managed to disintegrate the advance and finally to counter-attack and win back our front line from a demoralised foe. Battalion Headquarters were in a Heath Robinson ruin of a house with a fine panelled room, which was decorated with the crests and mottoes of the battalions which had been quartered there. Our transport and Quartermaster's stores moved to Gorre. In our Battalion Headquarters at Givenchy we found the following memorable lines :



The Red Dragon Crater.
One of the largest mines
blown in the war.

Taken from Aeroplane.

THE FAMOUS LINE OF MINE-CRATERS RUNNING NORTH AND SOUTH ASTRIDE GIVENCHY RIDGE.

Some of the craters are over sixty feet deep. The sapheads leading to the crater lips are very clear especially on the British side. The size of the craters should be compared with the small shell-holes, most of which are ten to twelve feet in diameter, and with the crater opposite page 136, which is barely a quarter of their size.

Hearken all ye whom Duty calls
To spend some time within these friendly walls:
Others will sojourn here when you have passed,
You were not first and you will not be last:
Therefore, take heed and do whate'er you may
For Safety or for Comfort while you stay:
Just put a sandbag here, a picture there,
To make a room more safe, a wall less bare.
Think, as you tread the thorny path of Duty,
Of Comfort, of Security, and Beauty.
So your Successors when they come shall say:
'A fine Battalion we relieved to-day.'

On September 21 we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment in the front line, having 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on our right on the Ridge and 11th East Lancashire Regiment on our left on the low ground north of it. This was our first experience in a heavily mined and cratered area with its huge craters 50 to 60 feet deep. Especial precautions had to be taken lest the Boche should blow fresh mines eating into our line, and try to occupy them, and consolidation parties with concertinas of barbed wire and bombs were always in readiness day and night. The mining situation when we arrived was still dangerous, as the deep German mines had well undercut our old shallow-level mines, while our deep mining did not yet give us any real protective value, though gradually the situation improved by strenuous labour on the part of the indefatigable 252nd Tunnelling Company in our sector. Meanwhile, the forward posts in the sapheads, pushed out on to the lips of craters, were in a somewhat critical position, and liable to be isolated and cut out at any moment by a determined enemy raiding-party. The tour was, however, generally a quiet one except for trench mortars, especially mediums, in response to our 60-lb. footballs.

On September 23 our 9.5 heavy trench mortars appeared on the scene, as artillery ammunition was still very scarce, and, after a considerable space in our front line was cleared, heavily mortared the enemy line with delay fuses: cascades of debris, duck boards, revetting stakes, and an occasional Boche appearing high up in the air. One 'short' unfortunately landed in the centre of our empty front line trench, destroying it entirely for about ten yards and forming a very good-sized crater. In response, the enemy trench mortars increased their fire, and especially on the following day when one Minenwerfer killed three of our men. In the case of one, his hair turned grey, and, though death was almost instantaneous, it went on turning colour until it became completely white. That night there was a very violent mutual bombardment from 10.20 P.M. to 11 P.M. just south of our sector, but nothing came our way, there being one of those curiously sharp lines of demarcation in the limits of the barrage. During and from this tour onwards, the Regimental Canteen, under the care of Sergeant May, always came up into the line and added considerably to the comfort of the men.

On 26th, 18th West Yorkshire Regiment relieved us, and the Battalion less A Company, which remained in the Village line, marched into billets at Gorre Chateau, where every one was exceedingly comfortable, the baths especially being good and well arranged. During the rest-period gas precautions were strictly enforced, as it was believed that the enemy had installed cylinder gas just to the south; and on more than one occasion the alarm came through to us, 'Gas being released well outside the Divisional area', and once caused one of our senior officers some consterna-

tion, as he was then in the middle of a hot bath: he decided to remain where he was—with a gas mask on.

On September 29 we returned to the Givenchy front line, relieving 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on our right and 13th York and Lancaster Regiment on our left. The tour, which lasted until October 4, was a quiet one, but Captain J. B. Hughes-Games was very severely wounded while out wiring, and in him we lost the services of one of our most painstaking and efficient Company Commanders. On relief by 1st Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry we moved into support in the Village line, and the following day, after handing over to 12th Gloucestershire Regiment, moved back to Bethune into the École des Jeunes Filles. We only had these good billets for one night, as the following day the Brigade marched to Busnes while we went on to our former comfortable quarters at La Pierrière shortly after mid-day. Unfortunately, after a very brief stay amid the luxuries of chickens, eggs, butter and milk, we marched on a sultry afternoon to Lillers, and, entraining there, reached Doullens at 11.30 P.M. After two hours' most trying march on unknown roads we reached Orville at 2.15 A.M. on October 9, and were allotted very inferior accommodation, tents and billets being both bad and scanty. We were now in Thirteenth Corps in the then-named Reserve Army. On the arrival of fresh troops in Orville the Battalion moved into bivouac in Orville Wood, and the weather at once broke, the result being that we were all cold and miserable. The Commanding Officer at once resumed hard training, and with the wood facilities the Companies had plenty of practice in wood fighting in addition to Battalion schemes.

CHAPTER VII

BACK TO THE SOMME, 1916–1917

On October 17 the Brigade began to move forward slowly by stages in bad weather and along water-logged roads, and many of us began, if not to sigh for the flesh-pots of Egypt, which certainly had not been attractive, at least to remember longingly the warmth of the previous winter. At St. Leger we began to re-enter the utter desolation of the Somme, pig-sties, hen-houses, cattle-byres being taken into use to give some shelter from the rain. On 21st every one was glad to move again on the chance of finding better quarters, and we made our watery way through Coigneux to Sailly-au-Bois, relieving 12th East Yorkshire Regiment in support to the Hébuterne sector. Sailly, though largely destroyed, gave us better billets than St. Leger, the chief objection being the fondness of the Boche for using it as a target for 5.9's and 4.2's, especially at night. A and B Companies were shelled out of billets on the second night and had to take to bivouacking in the open. C Company only had occasional 'strafes', while D Company, though moving out three times in one night, managed to live on in the remnants of the billet left to them after the shelling. It usually rained during these midnight

flittings, or to put it more correctly, the enemy appeared to shell chiefly when it rained at night, knowing the additional discomfort and hoping to catch the easy-going and somnolent ones ; anyhow, as it rained most nights, he had plenty of opportunity to do so. It can be easily imagined that the condition of the village gave the Commanding Officer a chance to practise village-fighting and carry out instructional schemes with the officers. From this time onwards, throughout the winter until the end of February 1917, the Battalion, while out of the line, had to endure the wearisome working parties practically every night, wiring defensive systems, digging trenches, carrying up trench mortar ammunition for light and mediums, taking forward and installing gas cylinders, clearing communicators apart from the ordinary work in the line, until no one, officer or man, felt that he could call a moment his own.

On October 26 we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment in the Hébuterne south sector, making our first acquaintance with the famous Hébuterne Suicide Corner, where it was reported that the same traffic control policeman was never seen twice. 18th West Yorkshire Regiment had just received a heavy gas-shell bombardment of the pine-apple type, and the ground occupied by D Company was still heavy with it. The trenches were very wet and muddy, and in spite of every effort could only be kept dry and passable in patches, the water gradually gaining the upper hand everywhere ; all communicators and trenches on the forward slope facing Gommecourt were deplorable, and the only satisfaction was that the Boche trenches were in still worse condition, our bombardments of his line being accompanied by

cascades of water. To add to the humour of the situation, the British Army paid rent for these desirable residences to the French, whereas, at a later date, the Americans more wisely bought their trenches outright. Naturally, nearly all forward movement, except in the case of single individuals, was restricted to night, when every one went over the top.

A policy of accustoming the enemy to bursts of fire was now adopted in order to mislead them as to the exact time and date of our impending attack on November 13. General Haking had in his previous address to the Officers of the Brigade explained the theory as follows: 'There will be heavy minute bursts of artillery, trench mortar, machine-gun, Lewis gun, rifle-grenades and rifle-fire at irregular times, but especially in the night and early morning; at the first burst all the Boche will expect an attack and pop out of their burrows and nothing will happen, but rather fewer of them will go down than came up; at each succeeding burst fewer Boche will pop up and still nothing will happen, but rather a smaller number will go back to their burrows than came out; then at last, when we have trained him and he is quite tame, and not even the sentry takes any notice of a burst except to duck down, we will come over and find him still in his burrow, and then you can let him come out or stop up his burrow just as you like.' This policy was carefully explained, and carried out for a fortnight or more prior to our attack of November 13, and was in the main successful.

On October 27 the unit on our right carried out a raid, but the state of No Man's Land, which was a honeycomb of water-logged shell holes, was all against success. In continuation of this policy all our

Companies did very active patrolling, but the fighting patrols met no one, and it appeared as if the enemy only desired to be left alone, as he put in no appearance in No Man's Land. His chief activity was in shelling Headquarters and blowing in the Regimental Aid Post, and in frequent gas-shelling of D Company's sector. Apart from the wet, a great drawback to this tour was the uncertainty when the installed gas cylinders would be discharged ; almost every evening if the wind was favourable about 6 P.M., the troops would be withdrawn from the gas zone often at very short notice and stowed away in rear trenches, all gas precautions being taken ; gas would then be cancelled, the troops would re-man the line and half the night's working hours had gone. Such was the regular evening programme, the sporting element alone in the Battalion making any capital out of it.

On 30th we were relieved by 12th York and Lancaster Regiment, handed in our gum-boots, went into comfortable billets at Rossignol Farm and resumed living. This year brought about great improvements in the storage and drying of gum-boots under Divisional arrangements as compared with the haphazard handling of them in the previous winter. Whale oil and foot rubbing also became a part of the daily limited toilette in the trenches, every stretcher-bearer being responsible that each man in his platoon rubbed his feet and changed his socks at least once a day ; the results were most encouraging, trench foot and frost-bite being practically unknown in the Battalion. Rossignol Farm was an excellent billet for the whole Battalion, and though it stood up conspicuously on a hill, was never shelled. The training area was not very good, but could be used for training

raiding parties, instruction in patrolling and small schemes. About this time, too, the Follies, the Divisional concert-party, came into being, also the Tonics of 92nd Infantry Brigade, followed later by the Nissen Nuts of 94th Infantry Brigade and the Owls of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. These evening entertainments, however, were only available for men not on working parties, and the ordinary Infantryman could not often enjoy them.

What the Infantryman did appreciate at this time, but that at rare intervals, was leave—not going on leave, which was a very different thing and sometimes rivalled the hardships of the trenches. The trains were in miserable condition ; doors and all windows were often absent and seldom replaced even by wooden shutters to keep out the icy draughts. The stove-heated horse trucks of very much later days were really comfortable, but military science did not attain to these until towards the end of the war. The reason for dilapidations was not difficult to find : in the first place, the very oldest French rolling-stock was used, the doors were bulged and impossible to shut, and were frequently torn off during travelling by other trains carelessly loaded with timber, etc., which had slipped. In one case within the Brigade the entire side of a compartment was torn out and a Brigade officer narrowly escaped a very serious accident. In another case within the Battalion a train was climbing a steep incline, and owing to the weight behind, the entire back-end of a carriage was pulled out, leaving the occupants still seated but rather surprised. All the danger of the war was not confined to the trenches. Again, with regard to the broken windows, the damage was not often wilful. In the first place, the men as

a whole were wonderfully good and well-disciplined on train journeys; secondly, to break windows would be only to increase the existing discomfort. What happened might be seen or rather heard at any advanced station in the dead of night: no lights were allowed either in the carriages or on the stations, and a voice would be heard: 'Twenty-five to Twenty-seven, Twenty-nine to Thirty-one Divisions get out here.' The carriages were generally crowded with men in full marching order, very few would know at which station to detrain until they heard the order, so they would hurriedly collect their kit, stumble over the feet of their comrades, and the pack, rifle or steel helmet might fall against a window, and this would be repeated nightly the whole way up the line. As no repairs appear to have been carried out in the early days, the condition of the carriages became more and more deplorable. Leave in France of seven to ten days was a much later and thoroughly appreciated innovation; it did not interfere with leave for England and there were always plenty of applicants for it.

On November 7 we returned to Hébuterne south, relieving 14th York and Lancaster Regiment, and finding the trenches worse than ever, some of the communicators being neck-high in porridge-like mud of extraordinary tenacity; even in the better trenches a gum-boot, once securely sucked in by mud thigh deep, was as good as lost. The gas programme of the previous tour was repeated and no gas was discharged. Headquarters was rather hotly shelled, but we had luck, and no real damage was done. Nothing of interest happened, and after handing over to 18th West Yorkshire Regiment we moved on 11th

into huts and sandbag shelters in the Dell, west of Sailly.

After the description of the General Post movement caused by gas installation to troops in the line, an account of what it meant to troops at rest (!) naturally follows. At 4 P.M. daily an unending procession of Infantrymen would be seen tramping through the gloom of a drenching November afternoon along the Sailly-Hébuterne road, for all roads lead to Rome, —Suicide Corner; mixed with these would splash along ammunition columns for the guns, pontoon wagons carrying elephant shelters or rails, G.S. wagons with wire and timber, limbers with rations, pack animals with anything, and probably some lorries with gas cylinders, gas shells or gas bombs, of which one or more might be leaking slightly. The mud can now be passed over only in silence. The whole column moves on slowly with frequent checks, as double-banking is not only forbidden, but is impossible owing to the returning stream of men and transport. The majority of us will probably admit that we only had two wishes: first, that the 18- and 60-pounders firing across the road would have sufficient elevation to clear our heads; second, that there would not be a check at Hébuterne Corner. By about 6 P.M. there would be, in addition to the garrison and front line troops in Hébuterne, well over 2000 men all moving forward towards the line on their thousand-and-one duties, and at the same hour 'Gasper', the code word for 'wind favourable for discharge of gas', would be received at the various Orderly Rooms of the units from which these parties had been found. At once, mounted orderlies and cyclists would hurry at full speed into Hébuterne to warn and bring back

their respective parties. Wagons, vehicles of all sorts, animals and men had then to turn round in the narrow, debris-strewn, shell-pitted village streets and get clear of Hébuterne, parties would be broken or cut in two by converging transport, and could only be got together again by the exertions of officers, non-commissioned officers and of the men themselves. And this did not happen one night, or two nights, but night after night ; yet it was entirely unavoidable, the working parties must carry on, and the gas must be discharged when possible ; and the fact that night after night parties returned to their units without a straggler speaks much for the self-discipline of the British soldier and the resourcefulness and powers of control possessed by the British officer and non-commissioned officer.

Hébuterne at its best was a spot where few people dawdled, as the enemy used to send all his spare ammunition there, and the village had a sinister and unhealthy reputation. The most dangerous spots were the crossroads at the west entrance, which were frequently hit, the pond which quite as frequently went up in the air, and the church which, lying between communication trenches, was smashed up, only two thick walls remaining. Behind this ruin lies the cemetery with its graves gashed open by shells. In the debris of the school hard by were found the school register of 1891, and old copy-books, in many of which was written as an exercise : '*La patrie me demande de grands sacrifices.*' How many who wrote those words more than a quarter of a century ago have made the sacrifice!

The increased artillery activity now made it quite clear that the guns were culminating for an attack

on a large scale. Most of the fire was directed to our right on our old battle-front of Serre and further south on Beaumont Hamel. In the Dell we were in reserve to 92nd Infantry Brigade, and as a Boche attack was expected to forestall our impending attack due for November 13, we were at twenty minutes' notice to stand to; meantime, we found a party of 50 men for training to put up a smoke barrage with P. bombs on the left of the attack, while the remainder of the Battalion carried stores, ammunition, rations and water up to battle dumps. At 6.15 P.M. on 12th the smoke party proceeded up to the line, and at 5.45 A.M., November 13, 92nd Infantry Brigade attacked the German line south-east of Hébuterne in conjunction with an assault on Serre, which failed on the fatal glacis as on July 1, while the springing of the great Beaumont Hamel mine, this time containing 25,000 lb. of ammonal, which had borne no fruits in July, succeeded, the defenders being overwhelmed and the site of the village captured. The 92nd Infantry Brigade after penetrating into the third German line, found themselves enfiladed from the impregnable heights of Serre, and were ordered by the Corps Commander to return to their original line that night. See Appendix II. (3).

On November 14, Headquarters A and B Companies moved into bivouacs on a frozen turnip-field west of Courcelles, C and D Companies returning to Rossignol Farm. The Battalion was still at twenty minutes' notice to reinforce 94th Infantry Brigade now in the line, in case the enemy took the offensive. The weather for open bivouacs in mid-November was bitter, and ice had to be thawed before a wash was possible. On 17th there was an inter-Company relief.



The Mousetrap Post.

Taken from Aeroplane.

GOMMECOURT SALIENT IN THE SNOW.

The German wire belts in front of and through the wood are faintly outlined in the snow. The snow shows up clearly which of the trenches are used and which are not, both in our lines and in the enemy's.

On 19th we moved in a thick mist to Sailly, met the two Companies from Rossignol Farm and took over Hébuterne north sector from 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, the going being very bad all the way. Here we found ourselves on a forward slope dominated by the Garde Stellung, the third German line ; both front lines lay in the valley, and our left at the Mousetrap was only thirty to forty yards at most from the German sap-head in front of Gommecourt salient and Park. There were, in addition, at this point two Russian saps parallel to each other, which extended from our close support line to under the Boche front line ; these had to be securely guarded day and night. The tour was quiet, and much patrolling and trench repair work was carried out, as the line was falling in badly in all directions owing to persistent rain. In an orchard at the north end of the village, and in our sector, was an excellent example of a camouflaged iron apple tree, covered with ivy made of green cloth. This was used as an Observation Post and was a much better and cleverer imitation than the rough-and-ready iron elm trees at Neuve Chapelle and near Neuville St. Vaast. The enemy had a very clever imitation tree on one of the Arras roads which was indistinguishable from the other shell-shattered tree-stumps on the roadside ; it was used by him as a machine-gun emplacement.

Towards the end of this tour, on or about November 25, two L.V.G. enemy aircraft attacked one of our F.E.2b, a long-distance, photography aeroplane, which had separated from the remainder of its flight. They forced it to land behind Hébuterne. We found later that Lieutenant J. A. V. Boddy was the observer in it, and that he had been knocked un-

conscious by a bit of his own machine which had been splintered off by the fire of the German aeroplanes.

On November 27, after a long tour in the line, we were relieved by 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, and, moving out by the newly cleared Nap trench to the north, avoided Hébuterne and reached Rossignol Farm *via* Bayencourt. This new route, avoiding Hébuterne Corner and the gas-swept road to Sailly, though involving heavy going if the ground was wet, was a distinct success. In billets, working parties continued as usual to help Battalions in the line and prevent their trenches from falling into a state of total collapse.

On December 3 the Battalion, less a party detailed to carry out a raid later and left out for special training, returned to the line using the same north route and took over from 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, and on 9th, after an exceptionally quiet time, again handed over to the same Battalion, and leaving B and C Companies as garrison of Hébuterne Keep, went into Brigade support at Sailly. B and C Companies were relieved by A and D on 12th. On 15th we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment. Our artillery began now to bombard Gommecourt salient preparatory to our raid, and some wire-cutting was done. The enemy retaliated and a shell, penetrating a dug-out and bursting inside, killed Captain D. S. Phorson and Second Lieutenant R. G. C. Busby, Second Lieutenant G. H. Lean having a marvellous escape with only a few splinter scratches. During the next two days the enemy made little reply to our bursts of artillery, and on 19th when the raid took place, though everything went exactly according to plan and the party penetrated even deeper into the

salient than was intended in the hope of obtaining an identification, no enemy were found and the German lines were seen to be in a state of complete ruin ; the few posts known to have been on the outskirts of the salient had in all probability fled at the opening of our barrage.

On December 21 we handed over to 12th East Yorkshire Regiment and embussed for rest billets at Famechon. Here we met the Baroness de Gommecourt, who was very anxious to know whether we thought that the silver plate which she had buried in the Park was still safe. She was an old lady of seventy and very plucky ; she had stayed at her château during the first great wave of the German advance, and when they were swept back and the line hardened through her Park, they allowed her to come through to the British. We now began to make all preparations for Christmas, and generosity at home made the dinners a complete success. The cooks did very fine work in parading punctually a party of seventy turkeys well dressed and well turned out, exact to time. The Divisional Commander visited the men's messes and wished them good luck. The day was wound up by a show given by 31st Divisional Ammunition Column.

On January 2, 1917, we moved up into Divisional Reserve, going *via* Pas and Couin along heavy roads to Bayencourt. The billets were wretched and leaky. After three days of working parties on trench repair, we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment in Hébuterne north. The trenches were totally impassable, all movement was over the top, and the posts were the only tolerable portions of the line. The rain still increased in violence, and landslides occurred

everywhere. On January 10 we were relieved by 10th Worcestershire Regiment of 57th Infantry Brigade and rendezvoused at Coigneux about midnight to embus for Outrebois west of Doullens, B Company proceeding farther west to Frohen-le-Petit. After a very frosty spell we moved on 16th to Thièvres to indifferent billets, A and C Companies going on to huts near Marieux. The huts, being incomplete, were worse than indifferent billets, and we found the weather very hard ; it was the beginning of the prolonged spell of frost in 1917.

On 22nd, after a long eighteen-mile march on frosty roads, we reached Heuzecourt, and training according to the Divisional programme began in earnest ; the sports also were fully organised. In the latter, our football eleven lost to the runners-up 0-1 in the Divisional competition. Sergeant F. H. Reay was first home in the Divisional cross-country platoon team race ; our platoon team was second. Privates R. Middleton and W. Christie won their events in the Divisional boxing, and in the tug-of-war our team was second. Our best and most satisfactory success was the very easy victory with a handsome margin by No. 8 Platoon under Second Lieutenant C. G. Findlay in the Divisional combined musketry and marching competition : this platoon was chosen to represent the Division in the Corps event. The D Company Platoon won the Divisional bombing competition.

On February 4 training was interfered with by the despatch of 300 men to work at Candas, but Company and several Battalion schemes, based chiefly on trench-to-trench attack following a barrage, had already been carried out. The biting north winds

over the snow-covered hills certainly tended to curtail training, but a great deal of very useful work was done. The training culminated on 16th in a Brigade scheme with a contact aeroplane, which was successfully carried out near Le Meillard.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPRING OF 1917

THE thaw now began to set in, and on February 19, when the roads had become extremely bad and very trying, we started on our long march up to Beauval, and the advantage of marching in threes, rather than in fours, on bad roads was clearly seen. On 20th we again had a long, wet trek to Couin, where the hut accommodation was most inadequate. On 21st the Battalion moved into support at Sailly with B and D Companies in Hébuterne Keep. After three quiet days of rest the Battalion was ordered on February 25 to be ready to move at 5 A.M. on the next day to take part in a general advance, as the enemy was reported to be retiring on a line from Gommecourt southwards. At 7.40 A.M. we moved up to Hébuterne, but operations were cancelled, and in the afternoon we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment in the front line.

On February 26 our observers reported Germans standing about in the neighbourhood of Garde Stellung, a trench on the crest of the ridge linking up their first and second trench systems, apparently watching for movement from our lines ; half an hour later they shelled No Man's Land and their own trenches about

Nameless Farm. In the afternoon at 4.15 P.M. six Platoons under the command of Second Lieutenants D. H. Keith and G. H. Lean left our lines in artillery formation to take up a line about Nameless Farm; this was observed, and the enemy put a thin barrage on No Man's Land. These Platoons got into touch with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment in the old German line where it cuts the Hébuterne-Bucquoy road. During the night of 26th-27th a forward dump of ammunition, rations and water was established in the old first German line by Lieutenant R. Armstrong. Early on the morning of 27th Second Lieutenant N. Richardson took two additional Platoons across as reinforcements. About mid-day Lance-Corporal T. Rigg and Private H. W. Lawer returned from an entirely voluntary reconnaissance of Gommecourt salient, Park and village and reported them all evacuated. This was an exceptionally daring piece of work, as after crossing No Man's Land they had plunged into the mysterious maze of Gommecourt salient, which was not then known to be empty, and had continued until they reached the fringe of our own artillery fire on the east side of the village. As a result, Second Lieutenants C. G. Findlay and J. H. Ruby took their Platoons from the Mousetrap and occupied the village, taking up a line on the east edge. Next morning on 28th Second Lieutenant C. G. Findlay handed over Gommecourt village to 4th Leicestershire Regiment on our left, obtaining with true Scotch caution an official receipt from them for this transaction. Second Lieutenant G. H. Lean then pushed out patrols to his left and got into touch with 4th Leicestershire Regiment by noon. Before 7.30 P.M. the entire Moltke Graben was occupied by the Battalion from Crucifix Corner

to Gommecourt Cemetery, and touch was established on both flanks.

On the night 28th February-1st March a Platoon of B Company made every effort to force its way into First Garde Stellung by working up Rom Graben on our left, but was strenuously resisted by a strong bombing party and two machine-guns and failed to get in. On the right two Platoons between Lehmann and Becker Graben lost their way in the intense darkness, these two communicators being practically obliterated by our shell-fire and giving no guiding marks. In the afternoon, a D Company patrol reported First Garde Stellung strongly held. They saw many Germans and several machine-guns, which were in action; the wire also was thick and strong. On March 2 our guns cut wire, but patrols reported a strong enemy party rewiring the gap at nightfall, and again after midnight. At 2 A.M. on March 3 18th West Yorkshire Regiment entered the once formidable strong point Rossignol Wood just to our right without any opposition, and accordingly at 6 A.M. Second Lieutenant H. E. Hitchin, M.M., worked up Pionier Graben, but was held up by wire and a strong block west of First Garde Stellung. At 7.25 A.M. Sergeant F. H. Reay with a Platoon of D Company forced a footing in First Garde Stellung and bombed his way to his right and left and linked up with another Platoon which had forced a way in by Becker Graben. These two Platoons extended to their left and got into touch near Gommecourt Cemetery with 5th Sherwood Foresters, who had relieved 4th Leicestershire Regiment. Between noon and 4 P.M. all efforts by B and D Companies to work south-east along Garde Stellung and link up with C Company,

endeavouring to enter it from Pionier and Schweikert Graben, were held up by strong wire and trench blocks, and it was arranged to bombard it, as the Stokes mortars were not able to come into action. The Companies were withdrawn from the immediate danger zone, and from 4.30 P.M. to 4.50 P.M. our 4·5's bombarded the Boche strong point in co-operation with 9·5 mortars, which by the most praiseworthy efforts had been brought with their unwieldy shells across the old shell-torn, water-logged No Man's Land and installed in Rossignol Wood. On the cessation of the bombardment the Companies which had gradually been creeping up dashed in and at once overpowered the garrison, taking 35 prisoners and 2 machine-guns, Second Lieutenants H. E. Hitchin, M.M., and J. B. Bradford showing fine leadership. The latter was one of the four distinguished Durham brothers, of whom Brigadier-General Bradford and Lieutenant-Commander Bradford gained the Victoria Cross, Captain Bradford the Distinguished Service Order, and Second Lieutenant Bradford the Military Cross. At 5.25 P.M. a German counter-attack from the Second Garde Stellung was repulsed with loss : we resumed the offensive at once and assaulted this trench, captured and consolidated it. Both the First and Second Garde Stellung were now firmly in our hands. At 7.40 P.M. we handed over the new position intact to 12th York and Lancaster Regiment and returned to billets in Rossignol Farm. Our casualties were 15 killed, 28 wounded ; our gains : Gommecourt, first and second German systems for about 1600 yards with both flanks secured, and the possession of a ridge which blocked all enemy observation over the Hébuterne plain and gave us command of the

slopes leading past Knife and Fork Woods direct to Bucquoy.

Next day while at rest, messages of congratulations began to pour in from General Sir H. de la P. Gough, commanding our army, for the excellent work of the Division during the week, with special congratulations on the capture of the Garde Stellung, and also from the Corps Commander and Divisional and Brigade Commanders. See Appendix II. (3 *a*).

On March 8, after three days' rest and refitting, we were ordered to move to Euston Dump north of the Sucrerie to work on the Colincamps-Serre broad-gauge railway. There being no accommodation available we moved to Magnolia Camp, a little south of the Dell, and until March 17 the whole Battalion went out daily on working parties on the railway. The work was interesting, as it took us over the well-known battlefield of Serre, and we were able to see our lines from the enemy point of view and to realise how he was able to remain there so long. The village used to stand on the top of a hill, and perfect observation of all our trenches and many of our gun positions was to be had from its slopes. The whole terrain had been cut up and scarred beyond recognition by incessant bombardment—from June 1916 to February 1917. All old landmarks had vanished and our own trenches, once so familiar to us, could not be distinguished. Serre was no longer a village, no longer even a brick-heap, it was merely a site, while of Pendant Copse no trees, only a few gaunt and battered sticks, remained. The rest was utter desolation, a shapeless, meaningless desolation of broken entanglements, derelict tanks, weather-beaten equipment and green slime craters.

On March 18 the Battalion began to move by long marches to First Army Area and reached Beauquesne, where we had been in March 1916; the next day we moved to Fienvillers, and thence on 20th to Neuvillette and Ransart, on 21st to Nuncq, and on 22nd to Bours, where we had a day's rest. On 24th we started again and marched to Westrehem and reached Béthune on 25th, finding billets in the Tobacco Factory. Throughout this week of marching the weather had been most favourable, bright and frosty with very little wind, and the Battalion had marched well.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUMMER OFFENSIVE OF 1917

WHILE we were at Béthune we were at four hours' notice to reinforce Sixtieth Division at Givenchy, which many of us took the chance to revisit. Training continued under bad conditions of weather and of ground.

Nothing definite was known of what was coming, but there was a general feeling of something ahead, and on April 9 the attack was launched on Vimy Ridge. On April 12 the Division began to move south; we went to Haillicourt, and on 14th to Caucourt, and thence on 20th to Ecoivres, and joined the Thirteenth Corps. A week of working parties on the Arras-Bailleul railway followed. While we were there, about 5 P.M. on a clear day with a few fleecy clouds about, two enemy Albatross aircraft were spotted and attacked by one of our Nieuport Scouts. They at once turned and flew for cover into the clouds, and, while in the mist, crashed into each other, one coming down in very small pieces, apparently cut up by the propeller of the other, which in turn, with its propeller smashed off short, began to volplane down and finally crashed. The pilot was not badly hurt and was captured.

On April 28 the Battalion, now in Eighth Corps, was attached to Sixty-third (Naval) Division and was ordered to rendezvous in fighting order south-east of Bailleul railway cutting ; this was done by 5 P.M. On 29th, 93rd Infantry Brigade took over the line from 188th Infantry Brigade, and the Battalion was placed in reserve. During the whole period there was violent shelling, and we suffered heavy casualties. On May 1 the Battalion moved back to the Black line, near Bois de la Maison Blanche. Preparations were now undertaken in full earnest for the attack on Gavrelle trench near Gavrelle, and the Battalion moved up on the night 2nd-3rd in reserve to 15th, 16th, 18th West Yorkshire Regiment from right to left, 92nd Infantry Brigade being on our left and Ninth Division on our right. The enemy barrage came down on the Battalion as it was getting into position. Our attack started about 4.30 A.M. on 3rd, but was absolutely overwhelmed by a furious bombardment, and the enemy regained the Windmill ; our left was then refused in order to avoid being turned by the enemy counter-attack, which appeared to have bitten deeply into the unit to the north of us. C Company, under Lieutenant H. E. Hitchin, D.S.O., M.M., now reattacked the Windmill and at the second attempt captured it, but was driven out temporarily by our own barrage, the artillery apparently not having been warned of our operation. The enemy thus again reached the Windmill, but were yet again thrown out by C Company, who consolidated and retained it, thereby linking up and presenting a solid Battalion front.[1] The 4th was spent in improving the position and reorganising before relief on night

[1] See Appendix, p. 164.

4th-5th by 94th Infantry Brigade. On the morning of 5th we reached a very poor camp north of St. Nicholas. On 7th we returned to the line east of Gavrelle, with 94th Infantry Brigade on our left and South African Brigade on our right. Each of the following days was marked by a succession of heavy bombardments, partly due to 5th Divisional fighting at Fresnoy and to the nervousness of the Boche.

On the night 10th-11th, after handing over to 16th West Yorkshire Regiment, we moved to the Black line, and on 11th, after relief by 12th East Yorkshire Regiment, moved into camp at Écurie. The following days were spent in refitting and practising for a night attack on 17th-18th. On 16th we relieved 12th East Yorkshire Regiment east of Gavrelle, with 9th West Ridings on our right and 14th York and Lancaster Regiment on the left. The object of the night attack was to capture Gavrelle trench and to cover the right flank of the Windmill ; A Company on the right, D on the left were to line up before Zero with a barrage from Zero to Zero + 4 minutes. Prior to and early in the attack, 1 officer was killed and 4 officers were wounded, including both Company Commanders. A Company was met by volleys of hand-grenades, but, attacking a second time, got in ; they were then counter-attacked on both flanks and came under a fierce machine-gun fire, and were finally forced back. D Company managed to reach Gavrelle trench; on the right the trench was totally destroyed and they overran it in the dark, on the left they were held up by wire and by a strongly-manned machine-gun nest, and failed to get a footing in the trench. The first party then came back to the trench and bombed to their left, with Lewis guns

co-operating on the top, but after an hour's fighting were counter-attacked by strong enemy waves in front and on both flanks and forced out. One valuable identification was, however, brought back, and a large number of enemy killed. Our losses were 1 officer, 8 other ranks killed; 4 officers, 41 other ranks wounded, and 17 more wounded and not brought in. The Battalion was reorganised on the night 18th-19th, as this could only be done under the cover of darkness, and on the following night we were relieved by the Howe Battalion, Sixty-third Division, and moved into camp at Roclincourt. From 22nd to 26th the Battalion worked on the Green line, running north and south through the Bailleul cutting, and on to Point du Jour. See Appendix II. (3 *b*).

On May 27 we moved into good billets at Marœuil. Enemy aeroplanes bombed a good deal round Marœuil at night. From May 28 to June 2 training and working parties on the new rifle-range at Bray continued. On June 3 we returned to Roclincourt and began working on roads and on the Red line north of Arras-Gavrelle road. On June 9 our Brigade relieved 188th Infantry Brigade, with 94th Infantry Brigade on the right and a unit of Seventeenth Corps on our left. We were in reserve in the Black line, finding working and carrying parties each night. On night 15th-16th we relieved 15th West Yorkshire Regiment in the front line, 18th West Yorkshire Regiment being on our right and 12th York and Lancaster Regiment on our left. The tour was fairly quiet but exceedingly hot, and the impossibility of burying all the fallen made the trenches insufferable. B Company, which was on the right of the Battalion, shot down in the early morning a low-flying enemy

aeroplane, which crashed in No Man's Land. On night 21st-22nd we handed over to 16th West Yorkshire Regiment and moved back to the Green line near Point du Jour, from which a wonderful panorama to the east over Oppy and Gavrelle and south to Monchy-le-Preux was obtainable. On June 27 we returned to the front line, taking over from 16th West Yorkshire Regiment, and on the following day, 94th Infantry Brigade on our left and the Division to the north of them, at 7.10 P.M. on a wide front stormed successfully Cadorna, Wood and Oppy trenches, gaining all objectives. Our part was confined to misleading the Boche by sending up coloured flares and false barrages of trench mortars and thermite, an explosive of white-hot heat hurled by shells. The casualties were slight. The 29th and 30th June were quiet. From 1st to 3rd July the enemy artillery was very active, and a raid near the Windmill was suspected but did not materialise ; our trenches were badly knocked about.

The night 3rd-4th was quiet and it was supposed that the Germans also were having a relief. We handed over to the Howe Battalion and 2nd Royal Marine Light Infantry, and reached Roclincourt after a very hot and long tour. While in this camp we resumed work on the Roclincourt-Bailleul light railway on July 6 and continued until 13th, moving on 16th to rather poor hutments, an old French camp in a stiff clay swamp beneath the wonderful ruined abbey of Mont St. Éloi. The great, white, fang-like towers of this abbey are a landmark for many leagues round, peering even over the Vimy Ridge as far as Douai and south to Monchy-le-Preux.

The Brigade was now in Divisional reserve, Thirty-first Division having taken over the Vimy sector

from First Canadian Division. From 15th to 20th training included battalion sports and a great deal of cricket, for which we turned out a very fair eleven. In the Brigade sports the Battalion did well, the tug-of-war team trained by Sergeant J. D. Moscrop, a really excellent instructor and himself of fine physique, being especially good, and after three magnificent pulls winning in the final against 16th West Yorkshire Regiment team. About this time the War Saving Certificates scheme was introduced to the notice of all ranks, and a very keen interest was aroused, which resulted in a large number of Certificates being taken up. This interest was renewed from time to time during the war by series of competitions offering free Certificates to be drawn for among the platoons with the highest number to their credit.

On July 21 the Brigade relieved 94th Infantry Brigade. We were in Brigade reserve at Thélus, and were heavily shelled from time to time, but the men had plenty of room in the old Thélus caves or underground quarry-workings, which stretched for great distances, but were very cold and damp to live in. This usually happened when the Canadian 8-inch howitzers in Thélus started firing.

From the top of the Vimy Ridge just in front of our Headquarters there was a wonderful view to the west, and from this Ridge the enemy once dominated the whole country from the low-lying cathedral at Arras to the high-perched abbey of Mont St. Éloi. Roclincourt, Écurie and Neuville St. Vaast seemed to lie at one's feet with the great glistening twin craters of white chalk near La Folie Farm and the lofty white Canadian Cross in honour of the fallen victors of Vimy and Thélus in the foreground. One turned

round from the west to face the east and, as it were on the other side of a panel picture, saw far away the churches of Douai and Henin Liétard, nearer at hand the white mass of the chalk quarries at Chez Bontemps, a German headquarters, the green of Bois Bernard where his guns lay, the sheer black sides of Drocourt Fosse with Acheville and Méricourt in front, and away to the north the battered skeletons of Sallaumines, Avion and Lens ; closer still lay the red brick ruins of Arleux and the white Mont Forêt quarries, and, immediately below the Ridge, Farbus, Willerval, round both of which our Batteries clustered thickly, and Vimy village, three heaps of desolation and ruin amid the wonderful colouring of the summer weeds that carpeted the plain, and at one's very feet the precipitous sides of the Vimy Ridge with their ravines, woods and great concrete buildings where the enemy had hidden for two years up till that astounding feat, the capture of the Ridge by the Canadians. And as one looked, the ruins of Lens would disappear hidden in great smoke eddies and wide-spreading mushrooms of red dust from houses collapsing under our heavies, a thick pall lying over the town for hours in daytime, or a firework display flashing over it at night. The activity of the Canadian gunners and infantry was untiring: they shelled, they raided, they met enemy raiders in No Man's Land, and threw them back with bomb and bayonet to the trenches from which they had come.

On July 29 we left the reserve line and moved up to the Méricourt front line. The whole of the tour was quiet, but a great deal of work was undertaken in linking up posts and in trench repair. 13th East Yorkshire Regiment relieved us on night August 6-7,



RUINS OF LENS CHURCH.

Visible from the Battalion Observation Post opposite Méricourt.

and we marched to Aux Rietz Corner near Neuville St. Vaast and rode in buses to Winnipeg Camp at Mont St. Éloi. From 8th to 15th there was company training with cricket in the afternoon. On August 16 the Battalion entrained at Laurel Siding for Neuville St. Vaast and marched thence to relieve 13th York and Lancaster Regiment in support in the Acheville sector with Headquarters near the Beehive, an immensely strong, domed concrete pill-box that had been shattered by a shell. Here we had a beautiful view of the Vimy plain in autumn colouring, the sorrel, cornflowers, poppies and coral root giving an extraordinary effect like a richly tinted Turkey carpet.

Fifth Division was now on our right and 92nd Infantry Brigade on our left. On our second night in, and the following nights, we carried up endless gas projector shells, and on August 20 at 12.30 A.M. there was a gas discharge of 1000 shells each containing 30 lb. of gas. These projectors, which we were soon to come to know too well, whether for gas or burning oil, were dug in at the required angle in the ground in deep tiers and could be discharged simultaneously or in any desired number of waves. The volume of gas could thus be made very dense and effective, while it was also far safer for our own troops and far more economical in labour than carrying up and installing the old gas cylinders in the front line, where they were liable to be exploded prematurely by a lucky enemy shell and when placed in position could only be used once. Still gas projectors were not popular, they drew too much retaliation and demanded large carrying parties.

About this time official documents were captured which warned the enemy division opposite us that

Thirty-first Division was a most energetic patrolling division, and that the utmost precautions were to be taken against surprise. A few months later another 'black list' document was captured in which Thirty-first Division was described as one of the most kampflüstig (keen on fighting) formations opposed to them.

We handed over on night August 21-22 to 11th East Lancashire Regiment, and then, crossing over north, relieved 11th East Yorkshire Regiment in the front line of the Méricourt sector with 18th West Yorkshire Regiment on our right and 94th Infantry Brigade on our left in touch with 85th Canadians of Third Canadian Division in front of Lens. This tour was fairly quiet except on 30th, when the enemy attempted a raid on our Company and on 18th West Yorkshire Regiment. He was, however, easily repulsed, and a prisoner, machine-gun and Bangalore torpedo were taken by our men, who also killed a German officer and several men. We had a few casualties.

Rain now fell for several days and the trenches became very greasy. On September 1 there was a slight epidemic in the Battalion, traced to the meat-pies. This was very unfortunate, as the use of the fuze-tins of 4·5 howitzers had been most useful to the cooks in making much appreciated pastry and meat-pies of a size most convenient for issue in the trenches. In this case it was probably due to the use of defective Maconochies in the pies. The cooks had by now reached an extraordinarily high standard in preparing food for the trenches ; as a variant to stew kept hot in special containers, steak-pies and rissoles were sent up ; in place of the cheese ration, cheese rissoles or savoury paste, scones, jam tarts, open tarts or roly-poly

were made, to give the men plenty of variety and an interest in the food. At the same time great economy was enforced, and the Battalion had a very good record for the fat-and-bone return to the Base. The pioneers were just as resourceful as the cooks; in cold weather they collected wood and made charcoal in ovens for use in the trenches, where no smoke was permissible, or made briquettes of clay and the coal-dust of which the ordinary infantry fuel ration was mainly composed. The cooks also in every new camp and often in the trenches built excellent field ovens of tins, petrol or Maconochie, and of a few angle-irons, or even of sandbags filled with clay, which when burnt hard resembled fire-bricks. The sanitary squad too was just as inventive; they evolved a patent clothes and underclothing disinfector which could be made quickly out of a couple of paraffin drums on a clay oven. Twenty minutes' steaming disinfected the clothing. The advantage of this home-made disinfector was that it could be kept going all day and the men could bring the articles at any time that suited themselves.

The 2nd and 3rd of September were uneventful. On 4th a Nieuport Scout brought down a Boche two-seater, which at a very great height was shot through the tank and finally lost a wing. It crashed and burst into flames on reaching the ground just west of Teddie Gerard trench, which had to be cleared of men owing to the intense heat. Both pilot and observer were killed. The Boche then shelled it to prevent our men salving it, and at night turned their machine-guns on it with so accurate a range that one of our party which was burying the two Germans was wounded. Just about the same period the enemy developed an

intense dislike for the observation balloon at Neuville St. Vaast and brought it and its successors down in flames eight times in seven days, costing us about £800 to £1000 a time.

In the evening of 4th the Canadian Mounted Rifles began to relieve the units in support and reserve which thus left the trenches early. From midnight to 12.40 A.M. and from 1.30 to 1.50 A.M. the enemy threw a thick barrage of mustard-gas shells on the Vimy area. One entire company of a Canadian unit was gassed in the La Chaudière brickstacks; we had only eight men slightly gassed, and found the curtains of dug-outs in all cases gas-proof and satisfactory. The effect of the mustard-gas, unless dense, only causes nausea at first, but later dangerous symptoms appear and often total collapse follows. The only safe way of dealing with men so gassed is immediate evacuation and complete rest. The gas hangs long on the ground and may remain inert for days until the sun warms the ground, when strong fumes rise. The liquid gas or any article splashed with it causes bad burns. It was now the custom of the enemy to mix high explosive and shrapnel with gas shells in order by the loud detonation of the former to conceal the unmistakable whirr and gentle burst of the gas shell. At first this was very effective, but the trick was soon discovered, though up to the end the device was often, from the enemy's point of view, successful for the moment. However, the Battalion had from incessant gas drill been singularly immune from gas casualties even under heavy gas attacks. The properties of the gas were not known to all, and one individual, who refused to diagnose a man as gassed because he had not turned green, caused a good deal

of amusement. Mistakes are easy indeed in this technical war of present days. To prevent the enemy from overwhelming back areas without warning with cloud gas, strombos-horns or sirens with compressed air were installed in the line. To maintain communication under an enemy barrage when all wires were cut, power buzzers and amplifiers were established similarly at Company Headquarters in the trenches. All these technical instruments were familiar, at least by name, to the Jack-of-all-trades, the infantryman, but were not so simple to the newly-arrived, and the Commanding Officer, on receiving a cheerful 'Certainly, sir' to his inquiry as to whether a particular company had a power buzzer, and on being shown the strombos-horn, felt a distinct shock. Among other strange instruments was the listening apparatus, at one time known, for some occult reason, as IT. This picked up Boche messages and gave most useful warnings of his impending operations. The Boche, in turn, had his listening apparatus, which in certain stages of the war picked up messages from our lines by transmission from steel rails, wire fences or sometimes an earth-line laid carefully by him in what he knew would be our probable position after his retirement, inside and parallel to our approximate front.

CHAPTER X

AUTUMN AND WINTER OF 1917–18

After leaving the Vimy sector, which we had handed over to the three remaining companies of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, all went well, and we reached Vancouver Camp north of Neuville St. Vaast by 2.30 A.M. September 7. At 5 P.M. we started in a violent thunderstorm for Territorial Siding and entrained for Bray, where we found billets and huts. These light railways, worked sometimes by small steam engines, sometimes by motor engines, to and from the Vimy and Arleux sectors and in 1918 near Meteren, were invaluable for saving the troops on their way in and out of the trenches. They also allowed greater depth in the distribution of Brigades when out of the line, and this ensured safer and more comfortable billets. By this time in the year every unit was engaged in building covered horse-standings for the winter. This sounds a simple task, but one must remember that, owing to constant changes in the sectors, each battalion built two or three at least, generally leaving them when nearly completed ; moreover, most of the material had to be salvaged as very little was supplied. Still, this system was no doubt very economical and saved a great deal of expense in new timber and corrugated iron.

From 7th to 18th battalion training and tactical schemes for the instruction of officers and non-commissioned officers in control and leadership formed the programme of the day.

On September 19 we moved into a new sector, relieving 13th East Yorkshire Regiment in Sandbag City on the Bailleul-Arleux road in support to 16th West Yorkshire Regiment in the Arleux sector. Fresnoy just east of Arleux had been won and lost in the summer, and our retention of the latter was essential in order to deny the enemy the rising ground which would have given the Germans clear observation to the foot of Vimy Ridge and rendered our gun positions round Willerval and the Sucrerie untenable. The lack of this observation made the enemy aircraft very active morning and evening, to the annoyance of the troops in support and reserve.

The maintenance of this ground was of such importance that early in August a series of strong systems of defence was built to protect the Vimy Ridge. Behind the front system came the Red Line, a very fine trench strongly wired and well provided with deep-shaft machine-gun emplacements, resting on Willerval and Bailleul and strengthened in front and in rear by covering fire from machine-gun nests; the Brown Line just east of the Farbus-Vimy railway embankment and pivoting on Farbus brickstacks; behind the embankment and dug in on the slopes of the Ridge numerous deeply-mined machine-gun emplacements strongly wired with wire rays tactically laid out to split up and divert enemy attacks by guiding them directly into the zones of machine-gun fire. West of the crest of the Ridge lay the Green Line, in places the old German line adapted to our needs, and

in support of this a series of strong points, mutually supporting and based on Thélus ; farther back came the Corps, Army and G.H.Q. systems. The planning of this work, which continued from the beginning of August 1917 to March 1918, was justified in its successful resistance to the great German offensive in March, when the front line alone was overwhelmed, and the enemy was broken up and never penetrated even the Red Line.

On September 25 we relieved 15th West Yorkshire Regiment in the front line of the Arleux sector. Our daylight patrols in No Man's Land now became very active both in observation and sniping. The enemy did a lot of trench mortar work on our lines, causing damages and casualties ; his low-flying aeroplanes also patrolled and machine-gunned our trenches, and he began to put over a good many gas shells. Altogether, he was more active than usual. On October 1 we handed over to 11th East Yorkshire Regiment and, marching out by the aptly-named Tired Alley, an endless trench with very fine but fatiguing traverses, entrained at Daylight railhead just west of the Ridge on the reverse slope and reached Écurie Camp.

This camp was now a very fine and large one, or rather a series of camps, with baths, cinemas, three or four concert-party huts for the Tonics, Nissen Nuts, the inimitable Quarante-Sept and the Très Bons, etc., and plenty of canteens. The horse-standings and Quartermasters' stores were also good. The main disadvantage was the sausage balloon in Écurie Wood, which was sent up wet or fine throughout the day and was heartily 'strafed' by high velocity 9·2's and 5·9's and caused showers of splinters and sometimes a few duds all over this enormous encampment, one of

the latter landing in the very centre of our cricket pitch. Splinter-proof banks against aeroplane bombs also had to be built round the horse-lines, huts, etc. This tour out was spent in working-parties of all descriptions at Total Post, Long Wood, Farbus, Roclincourt, etc. Two hundred barbed wire 'concertinas' had also to be made daily.

On October 13 we relieved 11th East Yorkshire Regiment in Arleux support. On 16th the enemy put down a hurricane bombardment of gas and high explosive on the Red Line and batteries in rear of it from 12.1 A.M. to 1.50 A.M. We had slight casualties. On 19th the Battalion moved up to the front line and took over from 16th West Yorkshire Regiment. This tour was again unpleasant owing to the activity of the German mortars with gas shells. Their heavies were also busy on our right Company's lines. In retaliation we shelled Fresnoy Wood and Park, and especially their headquarters at Chez Bontemps. We also cut their wire systematically, which again caused them to retaliate along our whole line, travelling from south to north. On October 25 we handed over to 11th East Yorkshire Regiment and trained from Daylight railhead to Écoivres, a poor camp in a swamp, but near a cinema and baths and a capital football ground. This village was Thirteenth Corps headquarters. In spite of incessant bad weather, company and battalion schemes were practised daily, together with a good deal of musketry. The Battalion was now re-inoculated. An inter-platoon tactical competition was arranged, which was won by a platoon of A Company under the command of Second Lieutenant J. Pattison.

During the latter portion of this rest period the

11th East Yorkshire carried out a most successful daylight raid north of Fresnoy. Their flanks were well protected by a smoke barrage ; the Boche trenches and headquarters were bombarded with harmless but most offensive smelling gas which caused the enemy to put on his gas masks and thereby to be at a disadvantage, while our troops knowing the plan were free from this hindrance. His headquarters at Chez Bontemps and his observation posts were barraged and blinded with burning oil projector shells and thermite, while, to mislead him, for a considerable distance on both flanks dummy tanks and rows of dummy painted figures were exposed ; these in the smoke and dust drew all his machine-gun fire, and by the enormous number of bullet-holes testified to the accuracy of his aim. He was rendered still more unhappy by showers of different coloured rockets of which he did not know the meaning on both flanks ; he could not—they had no meaning, but they puzzled him. The raid was an unqualified success, and a large number of prisoners were taken.

At this time it was the custom to pull the Boche's leg. On November 5 an effigy of the Kaiser was displayed in German uniform with a large cardboard iron cross complete. There was one unfortunate incident. A Polish deserter who came over to us said that many of his comrades wished to do the same. A large board with a notice in Polish was put up in No Man's Land. This caused many of the enemy, probably Poles, to collect in the trenches and expose themselves. The Light Trench Mortar Battery, who had apparently not been warned of the notice, seeing an excellent target, let fly in their midst. It was from certain points of view unfortunate, as we might other-

wise have had a large number of deserters. Deserters were not very fine specimens as a rule. On a previous occasion on the Somme while we were in the course of a relief, a very drunk German staggered across No Man's Land. He alternately embraced and struggled with his captors. His story was that they had been gambling in his dug-out, and he had killed a non-commissioned officer, so he thought he had better not wait any longer.

On November 9 we relieved 16th West Yorkshire Regiment in the Red Line, but thereafter extended our left flank to cover Willerval. Owing to the persistently wet weather the trenches were beginning to fall in and needed constant clearing and repair. At the same time there was a good deal of gas on Willerval batteries and on the Red Line just in front of them. On November 16 we went up to the front line to relieve 16th West Yorkshire Regiment. On 18th it was believed that the enemy forces opposite us were being relieved, and their trenches had several bursts of hurricane fire on them, and the cross-country routes in rear were shrapnelled. As a matter of fact, on the morning of 19th through the mists parties of Germans were seen in the open in marching order, and our guns got well into them.

During this tour work on the new system of defended localities was begun, preparatory to the approaching winter. It had been realised that it was impossible, owing to the weakness of battalions through the lack of men, to maintain long, continuous lines of trenches with endless communicators throughout the winter. Large self-contained and self-supporting posts were therefore constructed at intervals of 400-1000 yards with strong entanglements, a revetted front and close

support line, with weather- and splinter-proof cubby holes made of baby elephant iron sheets in front lines and dug-outs in the close support line for garrisons of a half to one and a half companies. The intervening trenches were filled in with wire, and the spaces strengthened by wire rays to prevent the enemy getting in and making flank attacks on a locality. The intervals were also carefully patrolled, and Very lights and Lewis guns fired from them at night in order to make the enemy believe that the whole line was occupied. The defended localities were most carefully sited to command all the ground of any tactical value, and the intervals between were covered by supporting defended localities, chequered 300-600 yards in rear. The system made for great economy in man-power and combined a very fair degree of comfort with great resisting power.

On November 23, after relief by 18th West Yorkshire Regiment, we moved back to the Red Line. The artillery was very active on both sides, our guns carrying out frequent hurricane bombardments while the enemy did destructive shoots on Willerval and its batteries, and on Arleux and Bailleul Sucrerie. On 29th, after relief by 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, we returned to the front line and 18th West Yorkshire Regiment went out. The enemy continued his activity, and we retaliated with gas shells, but as his bombardment on communicators and defended localities became very pronounced, our guns in accordance with a set scheme began wire-cutting. At dusk our patrols, as had been expected, found German wiring parties. The patrols at once fired a red-and-white light, and the machine-guns which had ranged on the gaps in daytime immediately opened up. As

work ceased and was not resumed, it was reasonably hoped that they had been effective. On December 6 this programme was repeated, a green-and-white light being fired, with similar satisfactory results. A little before this, when the enemy was showing signs of attempting active patrolling of No Man's Land, a drag-net barrage was evolved and successfully carried out. The methodical and regular patrolling of the Boche made it easy to mark down their usual tracks and usual hours. Our patrols went out a short way and, finding the enemy patrols, fired a signal; the guns at once put down a barrage between the enemy patrols and their trenches, and then, gradually shortening range, shepherded them towards our lines. The enemy were unable to side-slip away to the flanks, as these were locked by machine-gun barrages; our front-line Lewis guns then opened, firing low, and a very fair number were found killed or wounded not far from our lines.

On December 7 we were relieved by a composite force from 8th Middlesex Regiment and 1st London Regiment, and moved by light railway and bus to York Camp, Écoivres. We were now ordered to cut down kit, become mobile and get ready for a move. It was understood that this was preparatory to going to the Cambrai front. Unfortunately, however, the move was cancelled at the last moment, and our visit there was delayed until March 1918, when we arrived in much more unpleasant circumstances. Ordinary training followed, combined with tactical schemes for officers and non-commissioned officers, in which officers from 31st Machine Gun Battalion and 93rd Light Trench Mortar Battery took part. There was also plenty of musketry practice

on the Bray range. On 22nd we marched to Écurie Camp, going into Brigade reserve. Working-parties followed until Christmas Day, when a dinner was arranged for the Battalion with a concert by the Owls afterwards. On 28th we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment on Brierley Hill on the Ridge with two companies in Willerval North and Sugar Post. This relief was probably spotted by the enemy, who took the opportunity to shell Tommy Alley and Tunnel Dump throughout with 5·9's.

New Year's Day 1918 was very quiet and frosty. Working-parties could make little progress owing to the hardness of the ground. On January 3 we handed over to 12th East Yorkshire Regiment, who again were probably seen coming over the Ridge, as Tommy and Ouse Alleys were heavily shelled. We entrained for Écoivres. There we had several company and battalion schemes, representing a counter-attack on Arleux post on the supposition that the enemy had got in.

On January 15 we relieved 12th East Yorkshire Regiment with two companies in the Red Line and two in Arleux Loop. The thaw set in the same day, and trenches began to collapse, and in the course of the next two days became impassable. On the evening of January 19 we relieved 18th West Yorkshire Regiment in the front line entirely over the top, and took over Tommy, Arleux and Oak posts, as the system of defended localities had now been completed. Strong fighting patrols went out to examine certain shell-holes, consolidated by the enemy to form forward listening posts, and also Chump trench. The latter alone was found occupied. On 23rd, after relief by 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, we railed to Écurie Camp and provided the usual working-parties. On

27th we moved back to Écoivres and resumed normal training.

On February 5 the Battalion returned by rail to Daylight railhead and relieved 10th East Yorkshire Regiment in the Red Line and Arleux Loop, and were perpetually shelled until moving up to the front line and relieving 16th West Yorkshire Regiment on 11th. At about 3.15 A.M. on 12th a strong enemy patrol crept through our wire between Beer and Brandy trenches and intercepted one of our small ration-carrying parties. One of this party dashed past the enemy to warn Arleux Post garrison, while the other two, still carrying their loads, ran along the top of the trench and handed in the food-containers safe and sound to another post. A patrol went out at once to eject the enemy, and a sharp fight ensued. We had two casualties, but drove out the Boche, who left their rifles and bombs behind them. Accordingly, our daylight patrols again became very active, patrolling No Man's Land freely at any hour of the day, and carried out some very useful observation. Before going out of the line we got a deserter, who stated that the enemy suspected the presence of the Guards and intended shortly to make a raid to obtain an identification. This warned the 4th Grenadier Guards, who relieved us February 17, and they staved off a raid of four officers and sixty men specially selected with complete success, and no identification of the fact that 4th Guards Brigade had recently joined Thirty-first Division was obtained by the enemy. We entrained and reached Bray about 11 P.M.

With reference to the joining of 4th Guards Brigade to our Division, owing to the lack of men to keep battalions in the field up to establishment, a

general policy was now adopted through the British Army of reducing all Infantry Brigades from four to three battalions. This was done by amalgamating units, or by disbanding, and then re-drafting the men. In Thirty-first Division the four Battalions of East Yorkshire Regiment of 92nd Infantry Brigade were amalgamated into two Battalions, and 11th East Lancashire Regiment, strengthened by a draft of 400 men from another East Lancashire Battalion, was withdrawn from 94th Infantry Brigade and completed 92nd Infantry Brigade. In our Brigade 15th, 16th, 18th West Yorkshire Regiments formed 15th/17th West Yorkshire Regiment; 18th Durham Light Infantry remained intact; and 12th, 13th, and 14th York and Lancaster Regiments, withdrawn from 94th Infantry Brigade and forming 13th York and Lancaster Regiment, completed our Brigade. Thus 94th Infantry Brigade disappeared and 4th Guards Brigade took their place as the new 94th Infantry Brigade.

During our period of training at Bray, February 18 to 27, an enemy aeroplane landed a spy at night near Écoivres, but fortunately he was caught. This was a common form of obtaining intelligence, the spy then making his way back through neutral countries, after sending off his information by carrier-pigeon. One of our airmen is reported to have landed intelligence-men behind the enemy lines successfully at night no less than thirty-four times.

We then moved into G.H.Q. Reserve *via* Acq, Aubigny, and Frevillers after a long and muddy march to Magnicourt; the billets were miserable and the floors of the lofts in which the men slept dangerous,

consisting chiefly of straw strewn over poles or widely separated rafters ; the climax was reached when an orderly sergeant, warning a man in the evening for guard on the following day, fell with his victim through the floor into a pigsty beneath and landed among the four-legged occupants. After a week's cleaning, reorganisation, and training the Battalion sent 350 men away on working parties on the Reserve System of defence.

On March 1 Lieut.-Colonel R. E. Cheyne, after nineteen months' command of the Battalion, left us for a six months' command of a Battalion in England. Throughout this time, by his fearless tenacity of purpose, his single-mindedness of character, his powers of leadership and instruction, he had won the admiration and respect of the entire Battalion. After three weeks, during which Major D. E. Ince, M.C., commanded the Battalion, he was succeeded for a short period by Lieut.-Colonel H. F. G. Carter, M.C., of King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who had until lately commanded 18th West Yorkshire Regiment.

On March 11 we took over billets at Bajus and Frevillers. On March 15 the Battalion acted as Reserve Battalion in a Brigade attack near Herlin-le-Vert. Ceremonial parades filled up 18th and 19th, and on 20th, at the Brigade ceremonial parade at Tincques, Major-General W. O'Gowan, after about thirty-two months' command of the Division, bade us farewell, handing over his command to Major-General R. J. Bridgford, C.M.G., D.S.O.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE, 1918

On March 21 the great German spring offensive opened on the exact date forecasted by G.H.Q. Intelligence Department, the object being the entire annihilation of the Allies' fighting power. In the evening, while still at Bajus, we received orders to move according to the prearranged plan which had been communicated to us. At 7.15 A.M. on 22nd we marched to the embussing point between Berles and Tincques to move to Pommier. We rode *via* St. Pol, Frevent, Doullens, and after a very long, hot and dusty day reached Pommier ; there, owing to the increased pressure of the enemy, we were ordered to move straight up *via* Beaumetz-les-Loges to Blaireville, which we reached at 9 P.M. After debussing, packs were dumped, and the Battalion less first reinforcements embussed again and, moving by Boisleux St. Marc, debussed and marched on through Boyelles, not far from Bullécourt. The Army Line lay to the east of Boyelles about 300 yards west of the Arras-Bapaume road. The position was well wired, but the trenches were wide and very shallow, and the Companies at once completed portions of the system to give bombardment

protection. 4th Guards Brigade was on the right facing Mory, 93rd Infantry Brigade on the left opposite Croisilles ; in the latter Brigade 15th West Yorkshire Regiment was on the right, and 13th York and Lancaster Regiment on the left, 18th Durham Light Infantry being in support. 92nd Infantry Brigade were in reserve. The Battalion details stayed at Blaireville.

On March 23, 111th German and 2nd Guards Reserve Divisions attacked 31st Division, chiefly in the southern portion of the sector, and were driven off, but meanwhile the Division on our right was forced back : accordingly 92nd Infantry Brigade came up and reinforced our exposed flank towards Ervillers. During the day we were ordered to reconnoitre the switch line then occupied by the Guards Division ; this line lay 1500 yards east of Hamelincourt. Orders were issued for a move at dusk to this position, but a S.O.S. signal,[1] accompanied by shelling of the Arras-Bapaume road and of areas to the south, caused the order to be cancelled. After things had quietened down and after the Welsh Guards had relieved us, we proceeded along the Arras-Bapaume road and took up our position east and west across the road, A and D Companies on the west side, B and C on the east. During the early part of the day we had been astounded at seeing a convoy of lorries travelling fast along the road through our lines towards the enemy. The first six did not stop in spite of shouts and proceeded straight into Boche-land, where no doubt they were received with open arms, as they were carrying rations. We managed to head off the remainder, who somehow

[1] Eleven S.O.S. signals went up on our immediate front alone during the night.

or other turned round without being shelled by the enemy and moved off even faster than they had come, in fact all out for home. This is a fair example of the complete uncertainty of the whereabouts of a line while it is in a fluid state.

On March 24 the enemy attacked in force and took Mory by 9 A.M., and 4th Guards Brigade saw heavy masses of the enemy east of St. Leger : after the fall of Mory they dug a support switch towards Ervillers to keep touch with 40th Division on our right. Meanwhile 93rd Infantry Brigade was heavily shelled, and the enemy brought up numerous trench mortars. In the afternoon the enemy forced their way into Ervillers, and 40th Division curved northwards to cover Hamelincourt from the south-east. While this was happening, D Company was sent to dig a position for a Company of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment just west of St. Leger, where 13th York and Lancaster Regiment held the line. The Divisional line was now in a very critical position, as it lay in a sharp salient facing both east and south, the northern part of the Division not having budged, while the southern part had been compelled to conform to the Division on our right ; thus our right rear was threatened, and at the same time our left was in danger, as the enemy were striking for Boyelles. During the night of 24th-25th we relieved 2nd Irish Guards who sideslipped south.

On 25th, 92nd Infantry Brigade was ordered to relieve the pressure on the right, and by a fine counter-attack retook Ervillers, but the enemy enveloped their right which was unprotected and poured past the flank of the Division towards the western apex of the re-entrant in the British front, though they

lost heavily under the machine-guns of the East Yorkshires at point-blank range ; to prevent this and to divert the attention of the East Yorkshires, a whole regiment of 2nd Guards Reserve Division, assisted by massed artillery, endeavoured without success for three and a half hours to retake Ervillers. At 1.15 P.M. 93rd Infantry Brigade was fiercely attacked, but held on firmly, keeping off heavy assaulting masses by rifle-fire ; we were ordered to relieve 13th York and Lancaster Regiment, but by night the salient was so critically placed that the Division received orders to readjust their line and to take up a position from Moyenville to Ablainzevelle ; the final dispositions found 92nd Infantry Brigade on the right, 93rd on the left, 4th Guards Brigade in Reserve and the Guards Division on our left. Accordingly, our first orders were cancelled and we were instructed to withdraw to Hamelincourt Cemetery ; at the last moment this too was cancelled, and guides were given to take us to a new position. We moved along the Hamelincourt-Courcelles road to the railway crossing, and were finally given a position along a railway cutting about a mile south of the level crossing. As soon as this move was resumed one of our aeroplanes, which sounded like an R.E.8, dropped four bombs and killed six men of other Divisions attached to us and acting as a flank-guard during this parallel movement along the railway. We reached our new positions and dug slits under the hedges bordering the east edge of the cutting, with advanced posts about 300 yards east of the railway. We then tried to get into touch with 92nd Infantry Brigade on our right, the object of the move being to check any further advance of the enemy who had now broken through at Gomie-

court to the south. Troops of 40th Division began to filter through our lines.

Just before daybreak on 26th, D Company captured a German reconnoitring patrol coming from the direction of Gomiecourt ; unfortunately the officer from whom valuable information might have been obtained was shot dead in the *mêlée* ; the man was hit in the ammunition pouch ; this exploded his ammunition, and he proceeded to take down his trousers to see if he was wounded, howling all the time. About 7 A.M. a much delayed message, which should have reached us by midnight, was received to the effect that we were to move back and form support to 13th York and Lancaster Regiment who were digging in our rear. The Battalion, which was easily holding its own, was very much disappointed at these repeated orders for withdrawal, as we did not then realise how seriously things were going to the south of us. By great luck, in spite too of moving in broad daylight, we effected the withdrawal without many casualties, and the men behaved splendidly under the heavy shelling. We reached the high ground west of Moyenville, and had begun to dig in, when Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. G. Carter, M.C., was wounded. C Company, under Captain G. B. Stafford, who was wounded about the same time, and Lieutenant W. Allbeury, was covering our move and fighting a severe rearguard action, using all their ammunition on magnificent targets of the enemy. Shortly afterwards a Staff-Officer, who was later found to be suffering from severe shell-shock, informed us that a general retirement had been ordered on to the line Adinfer-Ficheux, and that we, with 13th York and Lancaster and 15th West Yorkshire Regiments, were

to cover the retirement. In agreement with 13th York and Lancaster Regiment on our left, our right being by this time completely in the air, we moved slowly back and found the Guards Division digging in 500 yards to our rear on the Ayette Ridge ; we halted behind them on a line 1000 yards west of Valley Wood, about 800 yards in front of the Adinfer line. This was personally reported to the Brigadier, who disagreed with the original order of the Staff-Officer and thought that it should not have been given, and ordered an attempt to be made to take up the Moyenville line again, if possible. Both Battalions then moved forward, and an officer's reconnoitring patrol went out and found the right of the Guards Division in the air ; on advancing further, this patrol was heavily fired on from Moyenville ; it was therefore impossible to move the two Battalions farther down the forward slope by day ; accordingly they dug in on the right of the Guards Division. Meanwhile the above orders to withdraw from Moyenville had not reached 15th West Yorkshire Regiment.

On the night 26th-27th a strenuous effort was made by 13th York and Lancaster Regiment and 18th Durham Light Infantry to advance and dig two lines 200 yards west of Moyenville, but no real progress was made owing to the journey up, the shortness of the night, and the lack of tools, so the parties were ordered to return to the Ayette Ridge ; B Company 18th Durham Light Infantry had, however, found old trenches and been able to repair these ; they therefore remained in front of Moyenville and linked up with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on their right. These gallant troops

extended their left and, finding Moyenville full of Boches, drove them out of the village and held on for thirty-six hours, maintaining a 2000-yards front and machine-gunning nine successive waves of Germans as they advanced from Courcelles against Moyenville, thereby relieving the pressure on the Divisional front. Their shattered remnants rejoined the Brigade on 27th, after fighting their way back with the utmost determination. B Company had lost so heavily and was so weak, having had over a hundred casualties, that it was put in reserve. Lieutenant A. A. M^{c}Connell and Second Lieutenant R. R. Turnbull had led their Company with great resolution.

On the morning of 27th Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Gurney, D.S.O., took temporary charge of the Brigade, Brigadier-General J. D. Ingles, D.S.O., being in hospital. Major W. D. Lowe, M.C., took over the command of the Battalion, coming up from the details which had moved from Blaireville to bivouacs south-west of Adinfer Wood and thence to bivouacs west of Bienvillers. While the Brigade details were encamped at Bienvillers an officer, dressed as a brigadier, had galloped into Bienvillers and reported the break-through of the Germans at Hébuterne ; he ordered the ridge running south-west from Bienvillers and facing Hébuterne from the north to be manned and a line to be dug to refuse the flanks, and all transport to move off at once to Warlus ; this was done. We then sent patrols through Fonquevillers, just north of Hébuterne, and found all quiet. Mean-while, the 142nd Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier-General J. Campbell, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., who was shortly to be our Divisional Commander, had been ordered up to fill the supposed gap, and took

over the new line. The report proved to be false and was set down to German agency, as similar cases had arisen elsewhere, the originators, as also in this instance, riding off and not being traced or identified later. There had indeed been a rumour, such is the fog of war, that German tanks had been seen east of Hébuterne, but these were found the same afternoon to have been motor-cultivators, etc., driven by French soldiers in uniform, and at a distance, especially in thick country, it is not easy to distinguish between the French faded sky-blue and the Boche new field-grey.

On the Ayette Ridge, which was one of the northern storm-centres of the enemy offensive, the entrenching was reorganised and developed into a respectably strong chequer system of considerable depth with Lewis guns pushed well forward to break up any attack, though the Battalions were terribly weak. To prolong the right of the Guards Division, 13th York and Lancaster Regiment was moved up, and A Company of our Battalion continued this to the south with the other Companies distributed in depth, the remaining Battalion of the Brigade now providing only one weak Company. On 28th the enemy made two violent attacks and succeeded in entering the line, but were at once ejected by a counter-attack of D Company, who were sent up from support to reinforce the front line. At mid-day Colonel R. D. Temple, now commanding 93rd Infantry Brigade, ordered us to move three companies to the rear of 2nd Irish Guards on our right on the Ridge to be used for counter-attacking purposes, if the Germans got a footing in their trenches. C Company was then sent up to the front line to thicken

2nd Irish Guards, as their left was very thinly held, and a Company of East Yorkshires was placed at the disposal of the Battalion Commander of 18th Durham Light Infantry to take their place. During these days the shelling on the crest and reverse slopes of the Ayette Ridge was exceptionally violent, and we had a very high percentage of casualties ; all movement from the cover of the trenches was dangerous. In rear of us lay 11th East Lancashire Regiment, who had passed through our lines to dig in, 1500 yards in our rear, on the fringe of Adinfer Wood. On our right the three Companies for counter-attack dug in for cover in the dried bed of the Cojeul river near Boiry Rictrude, while C and A Companies from right to left lay between 2nd Irish Guards and 13th York and Lancaster Regiment, the latter being also at our disposal on the east side, the Boiry Rictrude-Ayette road. The Brigade was thus satisfactorily straightened out and arranged in considerable depth. On the right of the Division touch was lost with the neighbouring Division. To fill the gap, 92nd Infantry Brigade was flung in, as the enemy was pushing south of our flank between Courcelles and Ablainzevelle. During the day 92nd Infantry Brigade lost their outpost line four times, but regained it each time. Finally, fighting their way back through 4th Guards Brigade which was covering Ayette, they reformed and held a line on the east fringe of Adinfer Wood. By 6 P.M. 4th Guards Brigade threw out a line to the south and found touch with 42nd Division who lay west of Ablainzevelle ; thus 31st Division linked up the line again. On 28th Lance-Corporal G. Girling of A Company brought down an enemy aeroplane in No Man's Land with his Lewis gun.

Hostile attacks were thrown back, but our lines suffered heavily under the enemy's fierce bombardment.

On 29th, in the evening, orders were received that, as 2nd Irish Guards had now received their own reinforcements and were sufficiently strong, we were to sideslip north and take over part of 13th York and Lancaster Regiment trenches, thereby allowing them to thicken up and increase in depth. This was done on the night 29th-30th, and Headquarters moved into a slit trench 500 yards south of the Sugar Factory; this trench lay close to the Boiry Rictrude-Douchy road and was a very hot corner. In the morning of 30th G.O.C. 97th Infantry Brigade and officers from 2nd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and from a Battalion of the Border Regiment visited our line preparatory to taking over. There was violent firing throughout the day, but it was fairly quiet at night for the relief. After the relief was complete, we were to have worked on the way out on the repair of the old German line west of Douchy, but the darkness hindering the complicated double relief, and orders being received that the Battalion was to be west of Monchy-au-Bois by 5.30 A.M. at the latest, no real work could possibly be done. We entered comfortable billets at Bienvillers after ten days of exhausting fighting, hard marching, and constant digging. Our last march back from the Ayette Ridge to Bienvillers over the old Somme battlefield was most interesting, but the majority were too tired to realise where they were. The Battalion had fully deserved the high credit given to it for its stubborn grip on the Ayette Ridge, which was one of the chief hinges on which the great German assault

pivoted.[1] Our casualties had been approximately 350.

During the day there was some shelling of Bienvillers. The Brigade was ordered to move to Souastre at 3 P.M., but this was cancelled, and at 4 A.M. on April 1 we marched to Ivergny, and on 2nd by route-march and bus to our old billets at Frevillers. Here work consisted chiefly of reorganising, refitting, baths, simple training, and musketry.

On April 10, just before the end of the morning's work at 12.30 P.M. the Battalion was ordered to move in fighting order to a point near Tincques to embus. In spite of the time required to call Companies in, get their dinners, hand in blankets, stores, etc., by 2 P.M. the Battalion was on the move. The transport had a thirty hours' march ahead of them, and with only one hour's rest finished their trek in wonderfully good time, the cooks, brakesmen, etc., marching the whole way in a most creditable manner. The buses were to off-load us in the Lillers-Busnes area, but this was countermanded in view of the urgency of the situation, and they drove through by 2 A.M. to Vieux Berquin, a run of 11 hours. Here, owing to engine trouble, ditched lorries, etc., when we debussed, the Battalion was short of five buses, all Headquarters' signallers and many Lewis gunners having been left on the road; these men, however, in their stout-hearted way, started to march with their telephone equipment, Lewis guns, magazine panniers, and what not, and ultimately joined up, some of them having had as much as 15 kilomètres to go under their heavy loads.

Brigadier-General S. C. Taylor, D.S.O., now

[1] See Appendix II. (4).

commanding the Brigade, ordered the Battalion to march on at once to Outtersteene and to throw out an outpost line covering this village on the east and south-east and to link up on the flanks. This was done by 5 A.M., and the men, thoroughly tired, turned down for a rest. During the morning there was heavy firing at times to the south. After mid-day the trenches were extended and improved. Brigade Headquarters were in the Convent at Merris. After a conference of Battalion Commanders at Brigade Headquarters at 4 P.M., the Battalion was informed that an attack was to take place on La Becque Farm and La Rose Farm, in conjunction with an attack by 13th York and Lancaster Regiment on our right, and still farther to our right by 92nd Infantry Brigade, who were to advance against Doulieu and Le Verrier. This advance was to begin at 7 P.M. This left very little time as the starting-point was some four miles away and the day was very hot, also shovels, picks, and extra S.A.A. had to be brought up and issued to the men. By dint of strenuous exertions the Companies were in position in time, C and D Companies in front wave from right to left, with A and B Companies in support. At 7.10 P.M. the two battalions advanced ; C Company had easy and open ground, D Company were in somewhat enclosed country, but the whole Battalion moved forward in perfect formation as for drill attack. Officers of another Division, who were watching, asked how long we had been practising for this attack. C Company made comparatively short work of La Rose Farm, while the other Companies took La Becque Farm ; each place was strongly garrisoned by the enemy. C Company passed on then to the second objective, a road lying across the

front, and dug in there with A Company on their left, meeting only with slight resistance. Lieutenant H. Seymour got a German heavy machine-gun into action and used it with effect ; several light machine-guns also were captured along with over thirty prisoners. The left half battalion meanwhile were also digging in on their second objective, getting into touch on their left with 74th Infantry Brigade. On the withdrawal of the latter, late in the evening, a large gap was left which D Company tried in vain to fill. Our right was in touch with 13th York and Lancaster Regiment and was secure. Their right in turn was in the air and wholly exposed, as the units attacking on that flank were upwards of 1000 yards in rear, not having reached their final objective, and it was this gap that proved so fatal to our Brigade the next day. During this night Major D. E. Ince, M.C., had the utmost difficulty in getting our rations up, and it was due to his indefatigable exertions, accompanied by very considerable personal danger, that we ever received them at all.

About 7.30 A.M., on April 12, all four Companies in quick succession reported the enemy massing in front ; immediately after came the information that the Battalion on the right was withdrawing, as their right, which lay open to the enemy, had been badly turned. C, our right Company, hung on for some time, until it was obvious that to hold on longer would involve the whole line being rolled up in detail. No artillery support, though urgently called for, was forthcoming, but the enemy casualties from rifle and Lewis gun fire were exceedingly heavy ; moreover, our machine-guns on the left flank did excellent work in supporting the retirement of D

Company, which was badly outflanked owing to the gap on the left and had held on doggedly until the other companies had been withdrawn. Our casualties had already amounted to about 270. The Battalion fell back to its first objective of the preceding night, but was again turned on both flanks. Successive lines of resistance were held until the Rau-du-Leet was reached, where for a short time we came under the fire of our own batteries. Here both Battalions stood fast, and 15th West Yorkshire Regiment came up to reinforce, but by this time the remnants of the Brigade were completely isolated and in a most critical position. The enemy, whose attack had been elaborately and ingeniously designed, was now coming on in thick clouds of skirmishers, supported very closely by mobile trench mortars and light batteries ; mounted men and cyclists were also seen, even his observation balloons were not more than 2500 yards away and could see everything. By a clever arrangement of showing Very lights whenever his troops had enveloped and turned our flanks, the enemy's artillery was kept closely informed of the progress of his infantry. Orders now came from Brigade to hold the railway line south and south-east of Outtersteene. This was a most difficult position, as it gave no cover to the men firing, being absolutely swept by machine-gun fire, and it was soon enfiladed by strong forces which had crossed the railway line to the west. The Brigade was, however, reorganised here, but had lost two-thirds or more of its numbers. Finally, the Brigade was again attacked from its right rear and forced to fall back once more to forestall complete envelopment. We retired by the right, 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, 13th York and Lancaster Regi-

ment, and our own right and left half Battalions in succession. Meanwhile, the personnel of the Regimental Aid Post, who had received no other orders than to endeavour to conform to our moves, had co-operated splendidly, not only by their admirable medical work, but also by their choice of new positions and whole-hearted co-operation throughout.

The Brigade now moved, after a hurried conference of Battalion commanders, slightly north-east towards Bailleul, and, finding 18th Middlesex (Pioneer) Regiment on a reserve line facing south and east midway between Bailleul and Meteren, prolonged their right to fill in the wide gap between this Battalion and a Battalion of the Queen's, thus covering Meteren. Here we again dug in with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on the right, 18th Durham Light Infantry on the left, and 13th York and Lancaster Regiment in support. We reported to 19th Infantry Brigade for orders and rations, and sent an officer and a runner by different routes to inform our own Brigade Headquarters of our position, casualties, etc. We obtained supplies of food and water for immediate requirements from abandoned farmhouses near our new line.

At first a series of rifle pits were sited and dug; these during the night and next day were systematically deepened, improved, and finally linked up into a continuous and well-traversed trench. On April 13 at 10 A.M. an intense and sustained barrage of heavy calibres opened on our new lines, which were necessarily on a forward slope and very conspicuous; this lasted for an hour; the bombardment was repeated at 3.30 P.M. and continued for three hours. Orders were issued for our relief by 5th Scottish Rifles, but they were too weak to carry this out, and we



METEREN VILLAGE AFTER ITS RECAPTURE BY THE BRITISH.

offered to remain in the line. The Brigade was now down to 450 rifles. The same night D Company did an excellent piece of patrol work under Second Lieutenant F. A. Flin, and established touch with the Queen's, who had lost all touch with their left posts. This consolidated the line. The same series of patrols searched a wood in front and found it clear of the enemy. Meteren, which had been shelled throughout the day, was now in full blaze, and the flaming thatch of the cottages lit up the country round. Bailleul was incessantly 'strafed,' and at times almost hidden under a pall of red brick dust and shell fumes. This was repeated throughout 14th from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M., and for six hours our trenches came under a devastating fire; the enemy made repeated efforts to get up, but were dealt with by Lewis gun and rifle fire, and also by our 18-pounders, which had now returned, coming up on the night 13th–14th, and they gave us invaluable support and encouragement by their indefatigable work. During the course of 14th between noon and 1 P.M. Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Tilly, in command of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, was killed instantaneously by a shell splinter through the heart; we thus lost a very gallant officer who, until quite lately, had been with the Battalion from its formation. All the enemy attacks were beaten back. Meanwhile G.O.C. 19th Infantry Brigade had arranged for our relief in the early hours of April 16 by a portion of 5th Battalion Tank Corps and sent Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Lowe, D.S.O., who was now in command of the remnants of the Brigade, a letter of very warm appreciation of the assistance of 93rd Infantry Brigade at such a critical juncture. About 6.30 A.M. on 16th the Brigade,

now less than 450 strong, handed over the line and moved *via* Flêtre and Caestre to Borre and reported to our Brigade Headquarters.

During this severe fighting the details of the Brigade had been heavily engaged. On the night 11th-12th they had moved back to Borre, having a very warm time among blazing motor-lorries in Strazeele and coming under severe bombardment by long-range guns. The next evening the details of 18th Durham Light Infantry were formed into a Company and were sent up to dig an advanced outpost line east of Merris across the Merris-Outtersteene road, the latter place having now fallen ; this they did successfully under slight shelling. On the morning of 13th there was a thick fog, during which the enemy enveloped both flanks, and our Lewis gunners had some magnificent targets ; ultimately the Company was ordered to withdraw from their advanced posts to the main line of resistance west of Merris ; at the last moment, while this evacuation was taking place, it was discovered that some refugees had remained in the Convent. During the rest of the day, in spite of shells and medium trench mortars which caused the Company numerous casualties, our men continued to improve the line. After our evacuation of Merris our artillery bombarded heavily, and by 7 P.M. the town was in flames. On this night the Transport, which had the utmost difficulty in locating the Company, had by a fine effort brought rations right up to the firing-line. On 14th the enemy shelled our trenches repeatedly through the day, and before dawn on 15th, after relief by an Australian Battalion, the Company moved back to Borre.

It was the stubborn resistance put up by 31st

Division in opposition to this determined and almost successful German attack on the Hazebrouck road- and rail-centre that caused the enemy to fail in his object in April which was to culminate in the capture of the Channel ports, just as he had but recently failed in March in his aim to divide the British and French armies and to reach Paris ; and in both attacks, southern and northern alike, its magnificent stand had won laurels for Thirty-first Division. See Appendix II. (5).

CHAPTER XII

THE TURN OF THE TIDE, 1918

THE German offensive had failed, and both sides were recovering breath for the next move. The Allies were the first to regain energy and slowly to win back lost ground before their final onrush and the grand debacle of the entire fighting force of Germany.

During April 15th-16th the Battalion was reorganised and temporarily amalgamated with 15th West Yorkshire Regiment under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Lowe. On 17th intense shelling opened on Borre, and we moved into the fields north-west of La Kreule : later in the afternoon, 93rd (composite) Battalion moved to L'Hoffand to man and work on the merely spit-locked outer defences of Hazebrouck. On April 18 we were ordered to relieve a battalion of 2nd Australian Infantry Brigade in the front line. After all arrangements had been made, this was cancelled, and on 19th, moving round by the north-west of Hazebrouck, we reached a hut camp at Le Grand Hasard. Here there was a good deal of aeroplane bombing at night. On 21st the Battalion was detached from the Brigade and lent to 92nd Infantry Brigade to hold the front line south of Hazebrouck - Strazeele railway, with defended

localities at Grand and Petit Sec Bois in rear. We relieved 3rd Australians on night 21st-22nd, having 6th Australians on our left and 11th East Yorkshire Regiment on our right. Our patrols reported an unusual amount of hostile movement in No Man's Land and round the houses at Le Paradis. On April 26 at 4.45 A.M., in co-operation with a raid by 92nd Infantry Brigade which proved abortive owing to a poor barrage and strong enemy resistance, we tried to raid an outlying farm, but found it strongly garrisoned and protected by three machine-gun nests, and the early daylight prevented our effecting a surprise. Later attempts next evening to secure an identification were frustrated, the enemy being strongly reinforced. On April 27 our Aid Post and Headquarters near Grand Sec Bois were heavily shelled by 5·9's and had to be temporarily evacuated. On night 27th-28th we handed over to 1st Border Regiment, and after a long and much protracted relief marched to a tent camp near Sercus.

Tours in the line were at the present remarkable for the large amount of fresh pork, veal, and chickens obtainable. There was also plenty of fresh milk and eggs. During the enemy's advance very little live stock had been removed by the French farmers, and, though this was gradually corralled and driven back to a kind of Divisional pound, it was impossible to get it all away at once. This was not wholly in our favour, as many animals were killed by shell-fire or wounded and then drowned in the dykes, and the burial parties had hard and unpleasant work, often having to wear box respirators while burying the animals.

At Sercus the Battalion was at one hour's notice, and found very large working-parties on the support and

reserve systems. We also built a small range for the Battalion, and had company schemes with dummy tanks.

On May 6, prior to his departure for England, Major-General R. J. Bridgford, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., said farewell to the Battalion. He had only commanded Thirty-first Division for two months, but had its complete confidence, and we were very sorry to lose him. He handed over to Major-General J. Campbell, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., who had commanded 142nd Infantry Brigade which relieved our details at Bienvillers in March. About this time we received provisional warnings that the Division was to be broken up owing to our very heavy losses in March and April, and used as instructional staff for U.S.A. army, but most fortunately this was averted, and the Division remained intact.

On May 9 we marched to a point 1000 yards west of Wallon Cappel and embussed at 8.30 P.M. for Caestre, moving *via* Hazebrouck and St. Sylvestre Cappel. At 11.30 P.M. we debussed and marched through Caestre and Flêtre into the support line north-west of Meteren, relieving 1st Australians, a Brigade of Australians being on our right and 160th Infantry Regiment French on our left. The relief and march up was a hot one, the enemy shelling all the back areas and overland routes. Captain L. A. Dick lived at the French Regimental Headquarters as liaison officer, and combined international posts were arranged. The enemy artillery now gradually weakened, and the French 75's opened with their ear-splitting crack. In this sector the trenches were very poor, and there were no communicators, so movement had to be reduced to a minimum, as most of our ground was under direct Boche observation from the high parts



The Church.

Taken from Aeroplane.

METEREN VILLAGE FIVE WEEKS AFTER ITS CAPTURE BY THE GERMANS.

The trench lines running down the centre of this photograph are British. The enemy lay up chiefly in rifle pits covered with straw, etc., in the daytime to escape observation.

of Meteren, which the enemy had captured twenty-four hours after the completion of our relief on April 15. All work, therefore, on the trenches, and much was required, was confined to night-time. During this tour we had our first experience of war-dogs as messengers ; most of the animals were reliable, though they varied a good deal in speed in delivering messages. A few were poor, and any dog that was shell-shocked was utterly useless and a pitiful sight.

On the evening of May 16 we took over the reserve line from 10th East Yorkshire Regiment, to whom we handed over the support line. We passed through a good deal of mustard gas during the move. Work on the defended localities, Phinc Boom, Haute Porte (nicknamed Hot Pot owing to its repeated shelling) and Quatre Fils Aymon, proceeded quickly in spite of a good deal of sporadic ' strafing ' by the enemy. On 21st we handed over to 11th East Yorkshire Regiment and took over the centre sub-sector of the front line from 10th East Yorkshire Regiment. We sent out a series of fighting patrols to locate enemy posts, preparatory to raiding them, but though they penetrated well into his supposed line they found no Germans. They appeared to be holding their front line with a few observation parties or listening posts at wide intervals, and these, moving to different positions every night, could not be definitely marked down for a raid ; the thick mists also added to the difficulties of our patrols. The enemy shelling was now becoming heavy and accurate, and he obtained direct hits on the trench line, Company and Battalion Headquarters. Our trench cow, which was regularly handed over as a trench store from battalion to battalion, was slightly wounded by a splinter but this did not reduce her

milk supply. Ultimately when things were getting too hot, as we were not likely to be able to replace her by indent if she was killed, we sent her to the Aid Post, which was not in so dangerous a place. The enemy's gas shelling each morning was severe, and the low-lying ground below the Ridge and round La Besace Farm was thick with gas daily. During this tour, while the Battalion was in the line, the details were in an excellent farm half a mile west of Caestre, and were most comfortable until they had been shelled out of it by 8-inch high-velocity shells, when it was decided to pack up and move into a tent camp to the south-west. As the weather was hot the men were quite comfortable in their new camp.

On the night 25th-26th we were relieved by 7th Seaforth Highlanders, marched to the west of Caestre, embussed at 4 A.M., and moved *via* St. Sylvestre Cappel, Cassel, and Arques to Heuringhem, debussed there and marched into very indifferent billets at Campagne, where, the week before we arrived, a very extensive ammunition dump up to the largest calibres had been badly bombed by enemy aircraft. The concussion had spread through the dump, and there were enormous craters; all the trees along the road-side were battered and blasted. Throughout our stay we were repeatedly visited by aeroplanes at night, and a large number of bombs were dropped, some being very close, within thirty yards of billets, but fortunately these were only 25 or 30 lb. bombs and did no damage.

On May 26 the Divisional Commander gave a lecture to all officers and non-commissioned officers of the Brigade at Racquinghem. Battalion and Brigade ceremonial parades were held, and General Plumer, commanding Second Army, inspected the

Brigade and, after a fine address, distributed decorations. The Brigade then marched past. The Battalion was on its mettle, and its splendid swing showed up very well. Ordinary training followed, but was broken into by inoculation, range-building, etc. However, the training soon became more regular ; company and battalion schemes were carried out, together with a great amount of musketry. The various inter-platoon musketry competitions certainly raised the standard of firing, both in accuracy and rapidity. In the afternoon there was cricket, and bathing in the canal, which wound up with a swimming gala; the gala was entirely successful and attracted a large number of competitors and spectators.

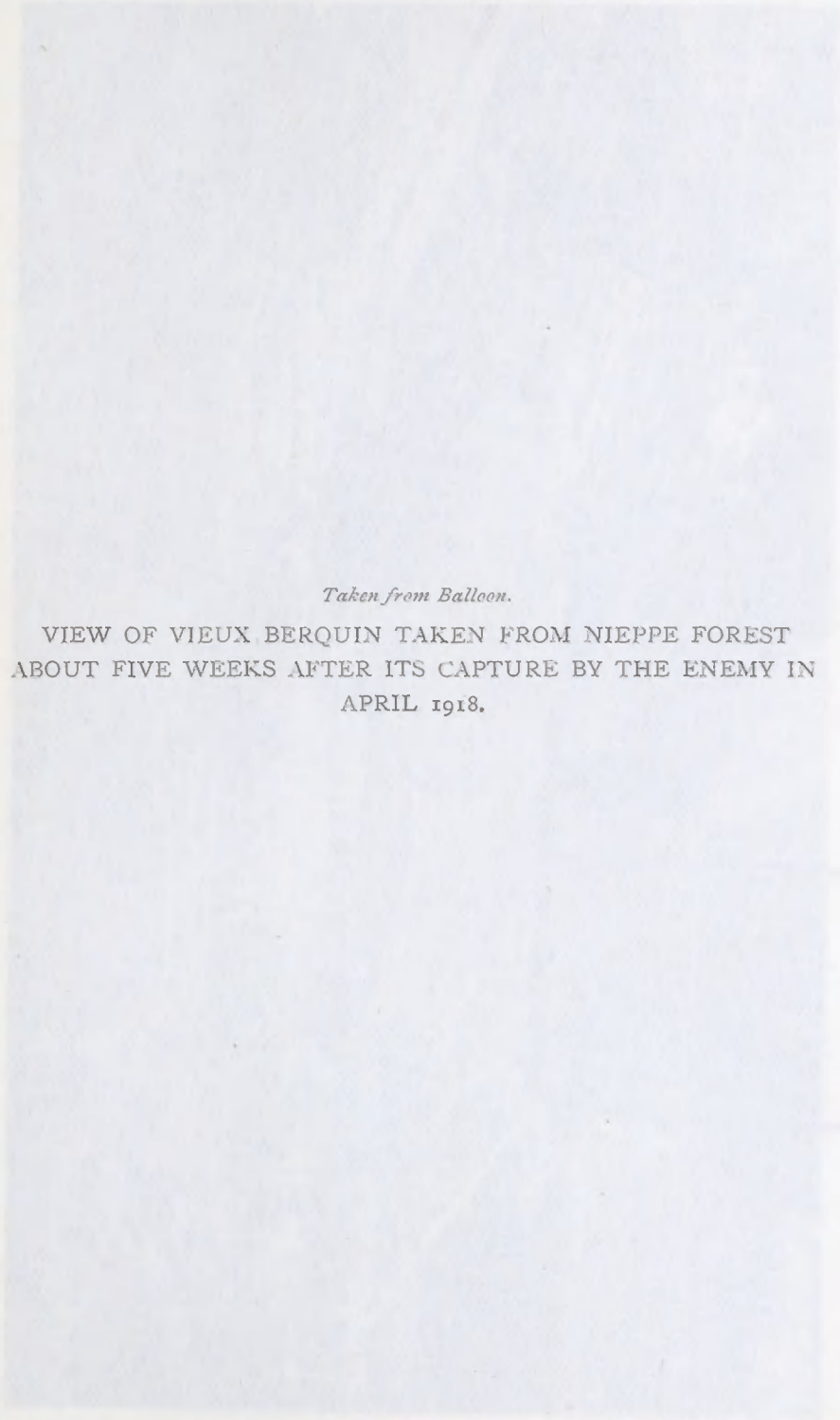
About this time the Divisional Commander, to promote esprit de corps in the Division, instituted a Divisional parchment and decoration to be awarded to all those who had received British decorations, and to others whose deeds in his opinion were worthy of recognition. This decoration consisted of an enamelled laurel wreath of green enamel with an enamelled red and white rose in the centre. The whole badge was about one and a half inches in diameter and was to be worn on the right shoulder just below the regimental shoulder-patch.

On June 14 there was an officers' reconnaissance for a Divisional scheme to take place on 15th, but sudden orders were received to march to the old Coolie Camp, south of Hondeghem. On 17th we moved to a camp near Bois des Huit Rues. On June 20 we moved east of the Morbecque Ridge and relieved 1st Lancashire Fusiliers of Twenty-ninth Division in the reserve line west of Grand Sec Bois. One Company held the Swartenbrouch, and one Company the Petit

Sec Bois defended localities. On 22nd we relieved 13th York and Lancaster Regiment in the front line, with 11th East Lancashire Regiment on our right, while 13th York and Lancaster Regiment sideslipped to our left, our Headquarters being in Swartenbrouch. Active patrolling took place in view of an impending attack on Ankle Farm and La Becque Farm by 13th York and Lancaster Regiment and 15th West Yorkshire Regiment respectively. The tour was a hot one both from shelling and from the grazing machine-gun fire. A great deal of gas shelling was also done by both sides.

On the night 25th-26th No. 9 Platoon dug and wired in an oblique series of posts in No Man's Land facing south-east to refuse and guard the right flank of 13th York and Lancaster Regiment after their advance on the following night. About 11 P.M. on the night of 26th-27th our two front line Companies vacated their trenches and lay behind the parados in order to make room for the assaulting troops, and placed spare footbridges for the wide ditches in readiness for the assault troops. At Zero, 12.30 A.M. on 27th, the line advanced in small columns under an excellent barrage. By 12.55 A.M. the attack of 13th York and Lancaster Regiment was successful, and No. 9 and half of No. 11 Platoon under Lieutenant W. Allbeury reached their position on the defensive flank, and after a sharp struggle captured some machine-guns and prisoners. See Appendix II. (6).

In the evening of 27th No. 1 and half of No. 2 Platoon of A Company under Lieutenant A. Everatt relieved C Company prior to the attack of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment on our right against La Becque Farm and of 92nd Infantry Brigade farther to the



Taken from Balloon.

VIEW OF VIEUX BERQUIN TAKEN FROM NIEPPE FOREST ABOUT FIVE WEEKS AFTER ITS CAPTURE BY THE ENEMY IN APRIL 1918.


VIEUX BERQUIN
Chimney and Bridge.
La Plate Becque Stream.
La Becque Farm and Enclosure.

south. B Company relieved the right front line Company of 13th York and Lancaster Regiment. Zero was fixed for 6 A.M., June 28. A Company moved forward in a series of small columns and by 6.5 A.M. reached their objective and, after some resistance, linked up with B Company on the line of La Plate Becque, the right defensive flank of the preceding night being now in rear. Some of our parties began to consolidate, while others carried the stream and attacked the German posts in the high corn, capturing thirty prisoners and a number of machine-guns which they turned against the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties. As there was no barrage to cover our advance, B Company was ordered to put down a barrage of rifle-grenades and Lewis guns obliquely across the front of A Company as the latter advanced. This was very effectively carried out and kept the enemy down until the final assault of A Company. At 7.2 A.M. both Brigades had captured all objectives and taken many prisoners and machine-guns and some field artillery. The nibbling process had begun, and it was undoubtedly effective in reducing the morale of the enemy. See Appendix II. (7).

During the night June 29th-30th we sideslipped south to relieve 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, a very difficult move owing to incessant gas- and heavy shelling. At 3.10 A.M. our guns put down a heavy counter-preparation to disperse the enemy, who were massing east of the stream near Vieux Berquin. On July 1 there was persistent mutual shelling, and Swartenbrouch Headquarters became very warm. This continued with occasional changes to pepper-shells on Headquarters, which only tickled the throat and eyes, until 4th, when we handed over to 10th

East Yorkshire Regiment and moved into Hull camp on the high ground west of Morbecque. Training consisted chiefly of range firing and rifle-grenade firing with phosphorus bombs, which set light even to green corn or grass. Previous to this, 4th Guards Brigade had left Thirty-first Division, and their place had been taken by 12th Norfolk Regiment, 12th Royal Scots Fusiliers and 24th Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the first two being dismounted Yeomanry units, and all three from Palestine. These Battalions formed the 94th Infantry Brigade.

On July 10 we relieved 12th Norfolk Regiment in the right front line east of Nieppe Forest with Vieux Berquin ruins in front, which gave the enemy good observation as far back as our reserve line on the east fringe of the Forest. On the late evening of 11th, A Company captured some prisoners and a machine-gun from a party of the enemy who apparently had lost their way, while trying to relieve one of their forward posts ; this took place on the Vierhouck-Caudescure road near La Plate Becque. We continued active patrolling of No Man's Land, and two nights later a corporal and two men went out on their own to silence a machine-gun which had been annoying their post. They attacked it, killed the gunner and took the gun, the rest of the enemy taking to their heels. It was about this time that an extraordinary incident occurred. In the evening the drone of one of our F.E.2b was distinguished on its return from Vieux Berquin ; then suddenly the whistle of one of our 6-inch howitzer shells was heard coming over from behind the Forest, and at once, low down, about 200 yards east of one of our posts in La Becque Farm, there was an explosion and sheet of flame close to the


RIDE C

A MAIN FOREST TRACK OR RIDE IN NIEPPE FOREST
WITH A LIGHT RAILWAY LINE FOR PUSHING UP RATIONS,
R.E. STORES, ETC.

The whole forest was criss-crossed with similar rides.

ground; evidently the shell had made a direct hit on the aeroplane. Next morning bits of engine, copper, and aluminium were found all round the post and as far back as Caudescure.

The next night we handed over to 15th West Yorkshire Regiment and moved into the Reserve System in the Forest. The weather had been very hot and the mosquitoes were appalling; several men were stung in the eye and temporarily blinded, and a number had to go into hospital; bad weather now set in, accompanied by torrential rains, which seemed to freshen up the activities of the mosquitoes, which certainly grew larger. The earth tracks in the Forest became seas of mud, and X track and No. 3 track will remain memories for ever: C ride was comparatively good.

On 16th and 17th respectively D and A Companies went back to the horse lines east of Wallon Cappel to practise an attack due to take place on the morning of July 19. The intention was for these two Companies and two Companies of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment to advance under a barrage and clear the ground of the enemy as far as La Plate Becque, from La Becque Farm southwards to the Vierhouck road. On 18th, preparatory to this operation we took over the front line from 13th York and Lancaster Regiment. At the last moment, entirely contrary to our expectations, the barrage was cancelled, as higher authority insisted that resistance would be slight. This was most unfortunate, as from prisoners taken later it was found that a new, hard-fighting Division had the day before come in to relieve a dud Division and held the front far more strongly under the most definite orders not to lose La Plate Becque. Zero was 6 A.M. Immediately after starting, B Company got

close up to the Enclosure, which was its objective, but were here fiercely resisted by machine-gun fire and grenades ; they tried to work up the hedgerows and to jump from shell-hole to shell-hole, but the ground was absolutely swept with fire. Finally, about 8.30 A.M. they dug in some fifty yards from the Enclosure, intending to push in at night. On the right, A Company pushed slightly nearer the stream, in some places almost on to its banks, but the machine-gun fire from both sides of the stream and enfilade fire from the Enclosure caused very heavy losses. They, however, dug in almost on their objective. The unit on their right had a still more difficult task ; from the outset they were enfiladed from the south and lost great numbers at the start. As it was impossible for them to get forward across No Man's Land, our right flank was turned by thick parties of the enemy creeping through the high standing corn. A Company refused their right, but the enemy worked along, following the cover of the corn, past our right and towards our rear, and A Company had to fight its way back. B Company, then isolated, managed gradually to conform, filtering the men through by degrees. Our casualties were severe, being upwards of 70, many being caused by enemy shell-fire in the open ; between 30 and 40 of the enemy were known to be killed.

On night July 19th-20th, Fifth Division on our right carried out a small raid ; had they agreed to do this and to co-operate with us on the morning of 19th, all might yet have gone well, even in the absence of the barrage. On 22nd, 11th East Lancashire Regiment relieved the Battalion, and we moved back to the camp west of Morbecque. On 28th we relieved 24th Royal

Welsh Fusiliers in the reserve line of the Grand Sec Bois Sector, with 92nd Infantry Brigade on our right and Fortieth Division on our left. There were large parties working on the Z, or reserve, line for the next few days.

It was about this time that we heard some definite news of the last great intended effort of the Germans, dated for July 19, against Hazebrouck as a pivot to push for the Channel ports. This was finally frustrated by our ceaseless night and day bombing and by our unending long-range firing on his railways and roads, which entirely cut off his communications and avenues of supplies to his vital areas; these should have been stocked weeks ago with ammunition and stores of all kinds. This destruction of his communications, and his inability to make the finishing preparations, combined with the increasing epidemic of influenza in the German army, first postponed and finally cancelled his last and expiring bid for fortune.

On August 1 we relieved 13th York and Lancaster Regiment in the front line of the Swartenbrouch Sector, but on the night 3rd-4th, after relief by 12th Norfolk Regiment and 23rd Lancashire Fusiliers, we took over the front line of 11th East Yorkshire Regiment, crossing over into the Nieppe Forest Sector. In both this and the last sector shelling was indiscriminate and sometimes rather vicious. A great deal of work was now done on defensive lines in the Nieppe system, which were largely breastworks, as water was reached on digging a foot down. Strong fighting patrols went out, but No Man's Land was clear, and the enemy suspicious of the danger there or lethargic. On August 6 the front line was evacuated, preparatory to a discharge of 20,000 lb. of gas from 600 projectors just in rear of the front trenches.

D Company took a prisoner early on the morning of 7th. He died from the gas effects soon afterwards. In the afternoon of the same day a daylight patrol from C Company reported to the Company Commander that the Enclosure did not appear to be held. Captain A. Neal, D.C.M., at once sent out Second Lieutenant J. G. Perry with six men to form a post there. After crossing 350 yards of No Man's Land in the clear afternoon this party worked down from the north flank and surprised and captured two posts, fourteen prisoners and their machine-gun, killing several others : a daring and fine piece of work.

At midnight, 7th-8th, the front line Companies advanced their line about 200 yards into No Man's Land, dug in and left small holding parties during the day, and on the next night completed and wired the posts in. The object of this was to enable the Companies to advance on a straight line if an attack was ordered, as our original front line was like an incurved bow and tended to cause loss of direction. Our day and night patrols were now finding the enemy more alert, and the enemy kept sweeping No Man's Land by perpetual bursts of heavy machine-gun fire, which showed his nervous condition.

On the night of August 9th-10th we were relieved by 11th East Yorkshire Regiment and moved to Hull camp. During the temporary absence of the Battalion Commander, Major D. E. Ince, M.C., took over the command. On 15th there was a battalion scheme in co-operation with a contact aeroplane. On August 22, Fortieth Division relieved Thirty-first Division in the Nieppe sector, and we marched on a burning afternoon, *via* Hazebrouck, to a camp belonging originally to some Australian pioneers, and therefore

correspondingly comfortable ; it lay east of Hondeghem near Le Peuplier. The march was very exhausting indeed and the sun caused several cases of partial collapse. On the evening of 23rd we moved up to the Meteren south sector, taking over from 12th Royal Scots Fusiliers. The trenches were mere rifle-pits and had to be linked up. Enemy shelling was constant and very accurate on Headquarters, roads and trenches. On 24th we handed over a part of the trenches on our right to 13th York and Lancaster Regiment and took over extra trenches as far as the Meteren-Bailleul road on our left from 5th Cameron Highlanders. The 25th was a very wet day and the trenches became really bad ; our daylight patrols saw a great deal of enemy movement. We tested some whistling message rockets, which had a range of 2000-3000 yards and fell within the enemy lines. They seemed to startle him considerably, and he opened fire, apparently imagining that they were the signal for starting an attack. There was violent shelling with numerous casualties on 26th and 27th, and the weather continued wet and depressing.

On the night 26th-27th our right was relieved by 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers and 12th Royal Scots Fusiliers. D Company now lay south of Bailleul-Meteren road with A Company on their right, C Company in support in African Trench, and B Company in reserve in Phinc Boom. Much wiring and trench repair took place. During the night 29th-30th it was decided to shorten our line by drawing a chord of posts across the re-entrant south-east of Meteren. Each front line company dug and wired three posts and occupied them before dawn. During the preceding day and night a very great number of

fires were seen in the enemy's back areas, a clear sign of an intended withdrawal. In the early morning our patrols reported no enemy near at hand. A and D Companies, under Captain L. A. Dick and Captain C. G. Killick, were ordered to move up to Coute Corner and then to send forward patrols into Bailleul; the two rear companies to conform. During their advance D Company captured several light minenwerfers with their carriages near Coute Corner. Their patrols also were first into Bailleul Grande Place, where they found no Germans or British. On climbing on to a roof they could not see any Germans to the east of the town. A Company patrols found no one in the south outskirts of the town, but got into touch with 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers near Bailleul station. The situation was reported to Brigade. Meanwhile C Company was ordered to take the Mont de Lille, which commanded the exits from the town and was the key to a further advance on to the Ravelsberg Ridge. Major D. E. Ince, M.C., reconnoitred the position and found that a prior attack by the unit on our right had failed. At 7 P.M. C Company seized the Mont de Lille and dug in. They buried the bodies of the unit which had failed earlier in the day and recovered their Lewis guns. The remainder of C Company formed a right defensive flank to keep touch with 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers, and D Company on their left filled in the gap to the right of 15th West Yorkshire Regiment. During this advance we found a number of simple booby-traps, such as bunches of grenades on cords across the entrances to dug-outs, bombs behind doors, curtains, etc.; but the men had been warned, and we had no casualties. The day after the Battalion had captured Bailleul, a Boche

spy dressed in British uniform was shot at the entrance to a cellar dug-out, in which he had a store of rations and full equipment of telephone apparatus and wires to his back areas. He must have been a brave man, as he could not have expected to wait long for the death which he met. See Appendix II. (8).

At 2.45 A.M. on August 31 the Brigade was ordered to advance and take up a line 1500 yards east of Mont de Lille and to consolidate with Twenty-ninth Division on our right and Thirty-sixth Division on our left. This operation was to take place after Thirty-sixth Division had captured the west end of the Ravelsberg, a hogsback ridge which runs east and west from Neuve Église to Mont de Lille and commands the entire country to the south, over which the Brigade and Twenty-ninth Division were to advance. By 7.30 A.M. the Ravelsberg was taken, and B and A Companies from right to left advanced in artillery formation with scouts well forward. D Company was in support, and C Company remained in reserve holding their trenches on Mont de Lille. By 10 A.M., in spite of hot opposition from snipers and machine-gun fire from houses and platforms in trees, all three companies were digging in somewhat beyond and east of their objective. A Company was in touch with a Battalion of the Inniskillings on the left, 15th West Yorkshire Regiment having been squeezed out in the advance, B Company lay astride the Bailleul-Armentières road with a platoon in an enormous tank-trap crater on the road, and formed a defensive right flank, as they were far in advance of, and out of touch with, the next unit. Both companies had patrols pushed forward and in touch with the enemy at Pegasus, Bolus and Blondin Farms. One of these

machine-gun nests had been located by a low-flying contact aeroplane, which dropped a message within fifty yards of Headquarters then moving forward, and thus warned us of its position. Shelling with 5·9's, 4·2's, and especially with whiz-bangs, now increased, and very little movement, except in the case of single individuals, was possible. B Company's right at last found touch by means of one of our patrols with the unit on our right, who finally pushed forward a post about 7.30 P.M. and secured our flank, which had been absolutely exposed throughout the day and offered a tempting opportunity to an enterprising enemy. Headquarters had been placed in a farm, but this position became impossible for runners to approach, and it was moved 200 yards back to Karrier Cottage. As Thirty-sixth and Twenty-ninth Divisions converged, it became useless to maintain Thirty-first Divisional front, which was now held by our Battalion only, and at 3.45 A.M. September 1 this sector was taken over from us by 1st Border Regiment of Twenty-ninth Division. Our casualties amounted to about twenty, but the number of narrow escapes from snipers, etc., made us think ourselves very lucky.

We moved along rather an unpleasantly 'strafed' road back to a tent and bivouac camp just west of Bailleul. This camp again revealed a large number of booby-traps, all of which were safely exploded. The Battalion was then put on to clearing roads in Bailleul from debris. Meteren had been flattened out, but Meteren was only a village; Bailleul had been a large and flourishing town of 14,000 inhabitants, and well built, and now there was not a house fit even to bivouac in.

On September 5 we moved forward to a tent camp east of the town and just under the Ravelsberg. This



RUINS OF BAILLEUL CHURCH.

camp unfortunately lay beneath a sausage-balloon and was perpetually shelled by high-velocity shells and heavy calibres. It was also shelled regularly at night, one dud falling beneath the regimental pioneers' bivouac, but one could not count on many being duds. Company tactical training and working-parties continued until 12th, when we moved forward again into a ruined camp on the south-west slopes of Neuve Église. In view of persistent shelling, companies and platoons were all separated out, but there were many casualties, and the companies were kept perpetually on the move. From 12.15 A.M. to 3 A.M. on 15th D Company, which was in shelter slit-trenches near Lampernisse Farm, came under a hurricane bombardment of mustard-gas. The first flight of shells burst in and around the trenches, and forty of the men who were asleep were gassed outright more or less seriously, as the sentries could not possibly warn all the men at once, and the first storm of shells came with such violence. This was the only occasion throughout the war that we had so large a number of gas casualties. Fortunately very few proved to be severe cases. D Company then moved forward to support 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, and C Company to support 13th York and Lancaster Regiment, both being in the Nieppe system and lying respectively north and south of Le Romarin. This Nieppe is a western suburb of Armentières and not to be confused with Nieppe Forest, south-east of Hazebrouck.

On the afternoon of 17th, just south of Headquarters, two lorries on Bailleul-Armentières road were hit direct by 4·2's and set on fire. One was quickly pulled out by another passing lorry, but the leading one, which was full of gas shells for the guns,

blazed furiously, and ultimately the gas shells exploded and released a widespread cloud of gas. On the early morning of September 18 the two front line Battalions made successful raids, capturing prisoners and a strong resistance-centre at Soyer Farm. Our right was now close to the outskirts of Armentières. Battalion Headquarters, which had moved forward to the Nieppe system for the raid, returned to the Neuve Église camp, and were violently shelled all day with heavy stuff, and had to move out temporarily. In the evening we handed over to 12th Norfolk Regiment. On return to our camp, under the Ravelsberg, C Company was most unfortunate, and, just before reaching camp, had eighteen casualties from a high-velocity 8-inch shell.

On September 20 we moved to a quieter spot, a tent camp west of La Crèche. Here there were many salvage working-parties, and the Army Education and Lecture System was started. This scheme developed later in the year, when it became possible to ensure greater continuity, and it was of very material benefit to those who took part in it, especially the book-keeping, accountancy, and shorthand classes. We built a small rifle range near the camp and carried through a number of successful double-company and battalion schemes, which were especially intended to develop infiltration in the attack and chequer consolidation in depth after the attack. While we were here, an immense volcano of flame was seen near, or east of Armentières, which was either a dump going up or a very large tank trap being blown.

On September 27 we moved up again and relieved 11th East Yorkshire Regiment in the Ploegsteert sector, and came under the orders of 92nd Infantry

A LARGE CRATER NEAR DE SEULE.

The result of an ammunition dump of heavy shells exploded by an aeroplane bomb. This crater was over twenty feet deep: it should be compared with the far larger craters on the Givenchy Ridge opposite page 53.

Brigade. From noon on 28th we were again at the disposal of 93rd Infantry Brigade. Our Headquarters remained at Petite Munque Farm. In the afternoon in accordance with a plan depending on the success of the earlier attack on Messines Ridge to the north, 92nd Infantry Brigade, to whom the Battalion was again attached, advanced at 3 P.M. with 11th East Lancashire Regiment on the left and 10th East Yorkshire Regiment on the right, both units forming to the right in order to attack Ploegsteert Wood from the north. Our task was to make a direct frontal attack on the west edge of the wood in order to create a diversion. This feint attack, from Maison 1875 at the south-west corner to Hyde Park Corner at the north-west, succeeded admirably, all our objectives being reached after a short struggle, with the capture of a number of prisoners and three machine-guns. Our formation was a series of shallow columns preceded by scouts in pairs, with Lewis guns well up. D Company, who had got a footing deep into the wood, could get no touch with 11th East Yorkshire Regiment except on our extreme left, which was the right pivot of this unit's change of direction, the hostile opposition on the north edge of the wood being very determined. C Company had got beyond their objective and taken Touquet Berthe Farm farther to the east, but were compelled by a hurricane bombardment of 4·2's and 77 m. to evacuate it, as, at the same time, their flanks were enveloped by two counter-attacks. The 92nd Infantry Brigade ordered the whole attack to be resumed at dawn on 29th. Our Companies, using the same formation, drove deeper into the wood and reached their objective, which ran north-east and south-west through Bunhill trench. They then pushed out advanced

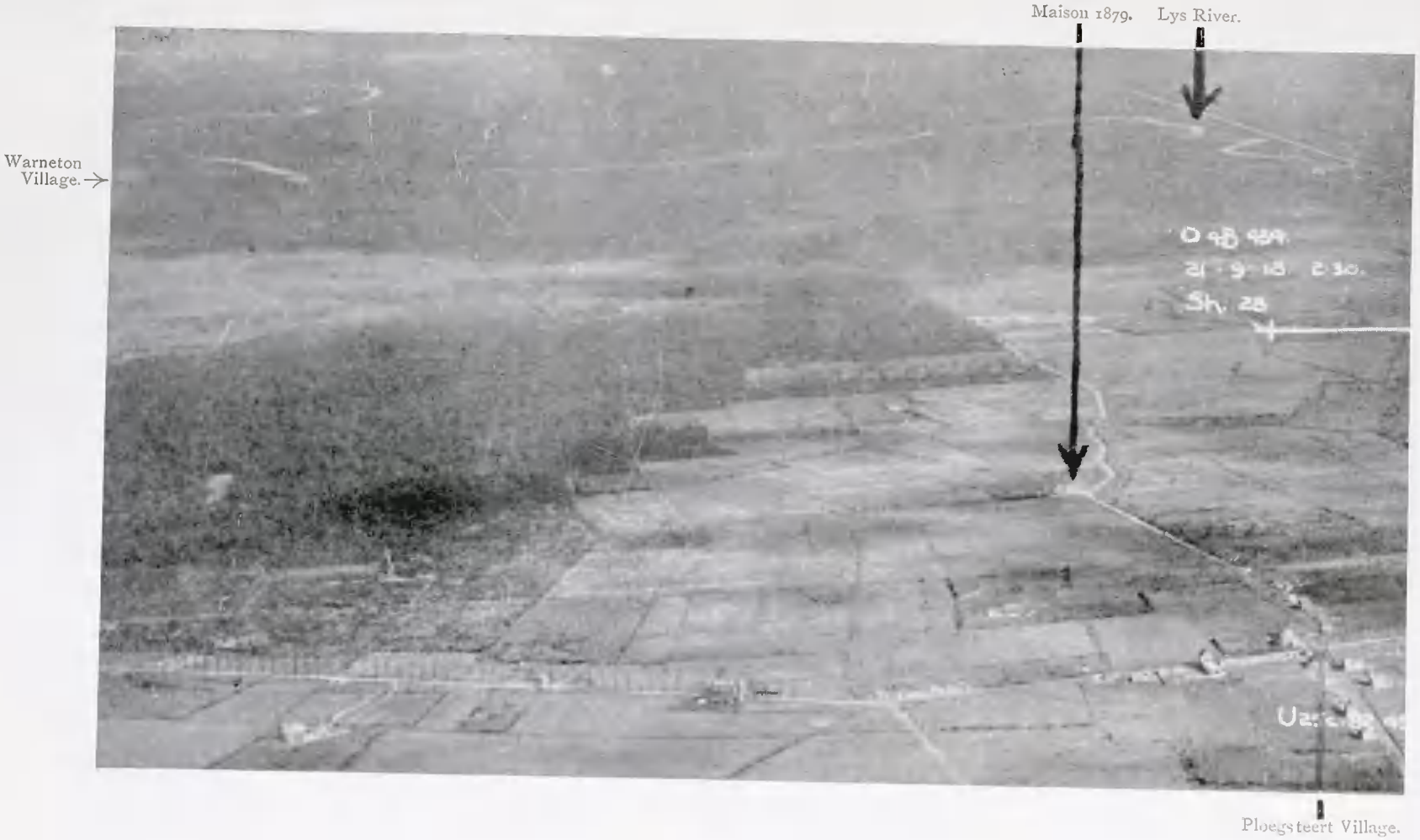
posts and secured touch with 10th East Yorkshire Regiment on the left, while the right flank was protected by a series of posts bending right back in echelon to Fortieth Division, who had not been able to get forward. See Appendix II. (9).

At 7 P.M. on 29th, in driving rain and intense darkness, the Battalion was ordered to withdraw from its new line, leaving only two platoons to cover the whole original front, and to move by the west and north edges of the wood, and finally down the east side into a position between the convent at the south-east corner of the wood and Ultimo crater, and to continue the attack in a south-east direction against Lys at dawn. All companies, in spite of the difficulties of torrential rain, seas of mud and the pitch-black night, did magnificently, Captain C. G. Killick leading the way with D Company along most intricate tracks to the farthest point with complete success. On the morning of 30th we advanced with wider intervals on the principles of infiltration, as the ground was very open, and reached our second and final objective, where we linked up with 12th Royal Scots Fusiliers on the left, our right being thrown far back and echeloned on this exposed flank, as the unit on our right had not yet advanced after the confusion caused by wood-fighting. On the morning of October 1 we were ordered to swing up our right at dawn towards the Lys in co-operation with the unit on our right, retaining our left as a pivot. This unit, owing to misadventure, did not advance until late in the day, and our right became still more exposed and suffered casualties, but the advance was continued, posts being dropped one after another to protect the flank of D Company, which was absolutely in the air. The day then became

Taken from Balloon.

PLOEGSTEERT WOOD.

Recaptured August 1918. The Lys winds in the background to the east of the wood. Armentières lies just outside the right of the photograph, Hill 63 to the left of the wood.


Maison 1879.
Lys River.
Warneton Village.
Ploegsteert Village.

brilliant, and the enemy artillery, probably observing from the houses in Deulemont, began to show great activity, and the unit on our right suffered very heavily, whereas the advance in the morning mists was inexpensive. D Company came in for the backwash of this shelling. See Appendix II. (10).

The above line was held until the night of 1st-2nd. We were relieved by the 11th East Yorkshire Regiment, and, after being much complimented by the G.O.C. 92nd Infantry Brigade, returned along appalling tracks under heavy rain to our own Brigade, now in a camp north of Neuve Église and at the foot of the southern slopes of Mont Kemmel. Estimated casualties to the enemy ninety-five ; our own casualties thirty-five, of whom fifteen were killed. This envelopment of Armentières from the north forced the evacuation of the town by the enemy, who, before he left, blew up the church towers which he had used for observation posts and which our artillery had spared.

In the new camp we were in the thick of our 6-inch naval guns and 6-inch howitzers, and accordingly were shelled badly with high-velocity 5·9's during the early morning of the first day ; fortunately nearly every shell was a dud. There were many extraordinarily narrow escapes; one shack had four shells round and under it. So we side-slipped our camp a short distance to the south-west. Up till the time of our entering this camp, our transport was at Le Romarin, where there were several German dug-outs with notice boards directing 'Zum Unterstand' ('To the dug-out'). The wits among the transport at once chalked up underneath 'And Zum Don't.' The transport, in spite of their hard work, certainly extracted a good deal of enjoyment out of life. On one occasion a driver, suddenly ordered

out with the water-cart, could only find one heavy draught horse and one small mule. He was stopped by a Brigadier, who asked him what he meant by driving such a pair. The driver assured him that it had been his regular pair for some time. The Brigadier retorted by asking what their names were. The driver, without a moment's hesitation, pointed to the horse and said 'Jack, sir,' and pointing to the small mule, 'And that un's Jack-ass.' The Brigadier laughed, and the driver went on his way undefeated.

While we had been detached from the Brigade at Ploegsteert, General S. C. Taylor, D.S.O., of our own Brigade, was badly wounded, and his Brigade-Major was killed by the same shell. The Brigadier died of wounds a few days later, and Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Rickman, D.S.O., took temporary command of the Brigade. The Brigadier, who had been with the Brigade since 1915, was much regretted by all.

On October 4 we relieved 13th York and Lancaster Regiment and a company of 29th Durham Light Infantry on the Warneton-Deulemont front on the west bank of the Lys. Patrols examined all the bridges across the river and found them practically impassable, as they were either broken by shelling or destroyed by the Boche. He had also made all the foot-bridges useless. Brigadier-General G. B. Smyth, D.S.O., now took command of the Brigade. On 6th we handed over to 12th Royal Scots Fusiliers and moved into tents at De Seule, south of Neuve Église. Active training began, including practice in intensive musketry and rifle-grenade firing, combined with platoon and company schemes. Major C. G. Killick now took temporary command, as the Battalion Commander was on leave.



REMAINS OF A BRIDGE OVER THE LYS AFTER ITS DESTRUCTION BY THE GERMANS.
Ruins of Warneton Church to the left.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST ADVANCE AND THE END, 1918

On October 16 the Battalion moved up to Ploegsteert with Headquarters in the Convent, the weather being very bad. We were ordered about 1 P.M. to cross the Lys north of Deulemont over a single duckboard bridge in rear of 92nd Infantry Brigade. The transport crossed about 11 P.M. on a hurriedly constructed pontoon bridge at Warneton. We spent the night in German shacks and pill-boxes in which, fortunately, for it was very dark, there were no booby-traps. On 17th Headquarters moved into Quesnoy. This town, after being burnt out early in the war, had been partly rebuilt by the enemy, who had used the shells of the walls as a framework for their new buildings. On 18th we went to a scattered village called Bondues. Here the country was not devastated, and a few civilians welcomed us. In the afternoon we went on to Tourcoing, in all about twenty-five kilomètres. During 19th we marched through Tourcoing and Roubaix to Lannoy, and were received with the wildest enthusiasm. The houses were covered with flags; some were very fine ones and represented the combined flags of the Allies, and were, therefore, comparatively new. The people in Roubaix told us that the Germans had actually sold many of

these to the inhabitants, just prior to their evacuation. As we marched through, little flags were stuck in the rifle barrels of every soldier in the Battalion, and wine, beer, liqueurs, coffee, cakes, and every imaginable thing was pressed on us. Owing to the pressure of the inhabitants, the column was repeatedly broken into sections, and sometimes into file. On reaching Lannoy we got into excellent billets, but the inhabitants insisted on every man having a bed, and on all sides it was, 'Vous êtes alliés, prenez ce que vous voulez et faites ce que vous voulez.' They would not hear of payment.

In spite of this reception, every man was punctually on parade next morning at 8.30 A.M., when we moved to Leers Nord, four miles east of Lannoy, where again we were most kindly treated. By this time we had passed through 92nd Infantry Brigade and were in support to 13th York and Lancaster Regiment, who were in the front line on the west bank of the Scheldt. During this week there was general cleaning up and a little training. On October 22 Lieutenant-Colonel F. C. Walton, M.C., from 1/6th Durham Light Infantry, took over command of the Battalion temporarily.

On October 26 we moved north-west to Mouscron and on 28th to Steenbrugge, a poverty-stricken village where the people were inhospitable and almost hostile. While we were there, the Boche aeroplanes bombed Courtrai and Steenbrugge at night. We remained in this uncomfortable spot till November 3, when we moved into Divisional reserve in Roncq. In this town there was a woollen factory of very great size. The Germans had gone to the trouble of knocking one cog out of every cog-wheel in the factory. There was also an enemy soda-water factory with 500,000 soda-water bottles full! These were excellent. The



A LARGE GERMAN CONCRETE PILL-BOX FOR ALL-ROUND MACHINE-GUN FIRE ON WEST BANK OF THE LYS.

Height about sixteen feet.

Germans had fled from this place on the first sight of British troops, not waiting for any attack. On November 8 news came that the German delegates were to arrive shortly to arrange terms for the Armistice. We moved forward the same day into support at Marcke, and thence on 9th to Sweveghem, preparatory to the Battalion forcing a crossing of the Scheldt and attacking the high ground east of Ruyen, a very fine position and one most difficult to carry, if the enemy should make any stand. On reaching Sweveghem, however, we found that the enemy had again run as a result, according to the statements of the inhabitants of Amougies and Orroir, of our preliminary shelling. The same evening we moved to Ruyen and crossed the Scheldt about 7 P.M. on a pontoon bridge, which was built by the sappers while we waited on the bank. Here 92nd Infantry Brigade, who were to have been in support while we attacked, passed over in front of us. The march had been very trying, and over bad roads eighteen miles was quite long enough. Ruyen was undamaged, but practically deserted. We stayed there, our transport joining us on 10th, on which day the Battalion moved to Renaix, a good-sized town, where we again had a very warm welcome. This was the first place where the gasworks had been left intact, and gas was being used in the houses, the Boche having to leave the town so precipitately that he had no time to devote to wanton destruction.

At 8 A.M. on November 11 the news came through that the Armistice was to come into force at 11 A.M. We moved east to Queneau; this was well inside Belgium, but there the people spoke only French, though farther west in many places the people knew no French and used only Flemish.



12.30 P.M.; the sergeants and corporals had theirs at 7 P.M.; the transport at 5 P.M.; the cooks putting theirs off to Boxing Day. Everything went off extremely well, and the dinners were the best we had ever had in France.

For these Christmas dinners, as well as for uncounted presents of all descriptions during the war, we were very much indebted to the continuous generosity of friends at home who had subscribed with such a free hand. In the same way we owed very much indeed to the 'Lady Anne Lambton fund' for mufflers, socks, gloves, badges, etc. Many associations, and also the readers of many newspapers, sent presents of tobacco, cigarettes, chocolate, papers, magazines, etc., to the Battalion. It was all these kindnesses, continued so regularly and for so long a time, that had made life under the stress and hardship of war still liveable, and reminded us how often the thoughts of those in England were with us.

Colonel R. Burdon, V.D., M.P., and Captain B. S. Roberts, who looked after the Battalion funds, never failed to give us any assistance asked for, keeping and supervising the accounts at very considerable trouble to themselves, more particularly to the former in the midst of his Parliamentary activities.

On New Year's Day 1919 sports were held, and during the first week in January our tug-of-war team lost by one pull to two to 15th West Yorkshire Regiment in the Divisional final. Our Battalion team was second both in the Brigade and Divisional Cross Country, Second Lieutenant E. R. Callender being first man home in the former. We had five members of the Brigade fifteen in the final of the Divisional Rugby, and in Association reached the

semi-final and were easily favourites, but unfortunately, owing to the prolonged frost, the competition was definitely cancelled, though it was unexpectedly resumed some weeks later, when we had lost eight of the eleven through demobilisation. In boxing, Sergeant R. Middleton easily won the Divisional Middle-weights and put up the best fight for the same weights in Second Army Championship at Lille, when suffering from a really very heavy chill.

On January 2 regimental censorship of letters was discontinued, to the sincere delight of both officers and other ranks. Educational classes in French, short-hand, book-keeping, economics, general history, mathematics, were in full swing, and continued until the Battalion was down to cadre. Meanwhile, the band, which had of late regained its old excellence and had been considerably strengthened in numbers, was now decreasing again. Demobilisation steadily continued. The only work done by the Battalion was the conversion of the concrete factory into Fifth Army Stables.

On January 16 Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Lowe, D.S.O., M.C., returned to the Battalion and resumed command. About midnight 28th-29th we received orders to entrain for Calais. Both Thirty-first and Thirty-fifth Divisions were ordered to Calais in view of the disturbances among the R.A.O.C. and R.O.D. We moved off at 5 A.M., and, travelling in unheated horse-vans, arrived 1 P.M. on 29th at Beau Marais and were given a tent camp ; there was snow on the ground and the weather was bitter. The transport followed by road. 105th Infantry Brigade piqueted Calais, to prevent disorder spreading beyond the docks and storehouses which had been seized by the R.A.O.C. Negotiations took place on 30th, General Sir W. R.

Birdwood, G.C.M.G., interviewing representatives. On 31st R.A.O.C. and R.O.D. resumed work, and the Divisional Commander, knowing how uncomfortable the men were, induced the Governor of Calais to send us back to Arques the same evening. Authority and discipline had won, and the bloodless battle of Calais was over.

During February work at the concrete factory continued, and after the snowfalls road-clearing parties were sent out. Owing to the shortage of fuel and the coldness of the billets, wood-collecting parties were detailed from companies daily. Rather later in the month the Pioneers put up about 600 wire beds in tiers for the incoming R.F.A. and for the personnel demobilising the artillery animals.

About this time the Battalion generally was sounded as to their willingness to form an Old Comrades' Association, with occasional meetings in the chief towns of the country. The idea was taken up enthusiastically, and a large number of names registered. It was hoped after the first preliminary meeting in Durham to form a Committee and to formulate the rules of the Association. Closely allied with this Association is a plan to administer the residue of the funds of the Battalion, augmented if possible by donations, under a small executive committee, for the benefit of those members of the Battalion who have been seriously disabled by the war, either by repayable loans without interest, or, in certain cases of extreme need, by gifts.[1]

On February 19 the Colours of all the Battalions

[1] The first General Meeting was held at Durham on March 6, 1920, and the Old Comrades' Association was formed. For particulars of membership application should be made to Captain W. T. Richardson, 47 Old Bailey, Durham.

of the Brigade, together with the Colours of 12th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, were consecrated. Captain R. A. Norris, C.F., consecrated the Colours, and they were presented by Brigadier-General G. B. Smyth, D.S.O., to Lieutenant W. Allbeury, M.C., who was in command of the Colour party. The drill of the latter was exceedingly good after the rehearsals of the previous days.

Early in March, except for a draft of approximately 300 all ranks due to join 2/6th Durham Light Infantry, the Battalion was practically down to cadre. On March 17 this draft, under command of Captain A. Borrell, entrained at St. Omer for Dieppe to report to their new unit. Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Lowe had taken temporary command of the Brigade in the previous week, and Major D. E. Ince, M.C., was in command of the Battalion. During the latter part of the month we were busy making preparations for the cadre to proceed to England; the horses and mules had been handed in, and all stores were made up to the mobilisation tables. Time now began to hang very heavy on our hands, and cricket material was obtained.

On April 24 we moved to Marlborough House camp at Blendecques, a part of the old Second Army School. This camp was a great improvement on Arques, and the surroundings really pretty; there was also a very fair cricket ground, and we had a number of sporting matches with outside units. At last, on May 16, the Stores and Transport moved to a field near Wizernes Station, and on 18th the cadre entrained, with Major D. E. Ince, M.C., in command, and started at 5.30 P.M. for Dunkerque, arriving 8.15 P.M. and proceeding to Hospice camp for the

night. On the following day the cadre moved into No. 3 Embarkation camp and sailed on s.s. *Mogileff* at 5 P.M. on 21st. The sea was dead calm, and they had a very comfortable voyage to Southampton, arriving there at 9.55 A.M. on 22nd. The cadre entrained and reached Catterick Bridge 10.30 A.M. on 23rd. The checking and handing over of the mobilisation stores was very rapid, as our Stores' personnel had everything cut and dried. On 25th Major D. E. Ince, M.C., explained to the cadre the procedure at Durham and the laying up of the Colours, which he had arranged with the Dean and Mayor of Durham, together with Colonel R. Burdon, V.D., M.P., and Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes, T.D.

On May 27 the cadre entrained for Durham and arrived at 11.45 A.M.; they stored kits in the station and marched with Colours cased through the decorated streets to the Market-place, where there was a large crowd awaiting them. After the cadre had had lunch, they formed up inside the Town Hall, marched out with Colours uncased, and faced the Town Hall, many old members of the Battalion forming up in rear of the cadre; these were about 120 in number. Mrs. C. D. Shafto then fastened a laurel wreath to the pole. The following speeches were made from the balcony of the Town Hall:

The Mayor said that Durham was proud of the opportunity to give a hearty welcome back to the men of the 18th Durham Light Infantry. The name 'Pals' had been a household word, and no other Battalion had been more in their thoughts. Their glorious service in Egypt and France had been closely followed, their successes admired, and their casualties mourned by every citizen of Durham, and they felt

honoured that the Battalion had come to Durham to deposit its Colours in their glorious Cathedral. To the relatives of those who had made the great sacrifice they extended sincere sympathy, and to those who had been spared to return they wished good fortune and the best of happiness for the remainder of their lives.

Lord Durham said that they were all proud to welcome the men back to the city and county of Durham, and proud of the great services which they had rendered their country during the war. Some of those present knew from the very day the Battalion was raised, with what zeal and energy the men devoted themselves to make it one of the most efficient of their gallant Army, which had saved the country from ruin and devastation, and had rescued the world for civilisation. The recruits of the Battalion came from all trades and professions, and were representative of almost all classes. He might almost say that the united talents of the men would have enabled them to build a battleship, or even to run a Government Department economically. Having referred to the Battalion's splendid performances in Egypt and France, his Lordship added that, whatever memorial was erected for the county, none would be regarded with more reverence, pride, and gratitude than the Colours of the 18th Durham Light Infantry.

Alderman A. Pattison (Deputy-Mayor) also addressed words of welcome to the men, and said that he would mourn the loss of many a bright fellow, whose acquaintance it had been his privilege to make, and whose faces he would see no more.

Colonel Rowland Burdon, V.D., M.P., said that as one who had perhaps more to do with sending the

Battalion away than anybody, he was specially delighted to welcome the men home. If ever any one of them wanted a friend, they had only to appeal to the Lord Lieutenant or himself. In the early days, soon after the Battalion was raised, the fact that such an excellent Battalion had been formed so affected the War Office that Lord Kitchener sent for him, and, through him and the Lord Lieutenant, thanked the county for having added to His Majesty's Forces such a magnificent Battalion. He did not think any other unit had received such a compliment. After having served abroad he wanted the men of the 18th Battalion to help now at home, in order to make sure that the country would not in the future be caught in the condition in which she was in 1914. Although the records of the Battalion were being compiled, he was afraid it would not be sufficiently known that the 18th Durham Light Infantry had on more than one occasion filled a gap, which no other Battalion in similar circumstances could, perhaps, have filled, and had thereby saved the country from very great disaster. The records of the 18th Battalion would add honour to those of their great County Regiment.

Major Ince, M.C., on behalf of the Battalion, returned thanks for the hearty welcome accorded to them, and for the kind treatment extended to the men while on service. There were many institutions, societies, and committees to which they were extremely grateful for the supply of comforts, etc., which had helped to make life worth living in Flanders and elsewhere.

The cadre, Colour party, and former members of the Battalion, followed by the Mayor's bodyguard, the Mayor, Lord Durham, and others, marched to

the Cathedral. At the close of the service the Dean proceeded to the altar, and there Lieutenant C. C. Priestman, the officer in charge of the Colours, handed the Colours to Major D. E. Ince. The Dean then gave a short address, saying :

'In the name of the Dean and Chapter of this ancient Cathedral I accept these Colours of the Battalion, which is so near and dear to us. It is, in a sense, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. It is associated with the very life of the county. Its losses have been our personal bereavements, its victories have been our glories. We know that in the recent war, not in Egypt only, but at Neuve Chapelle, at Gavrelle, at Armentières, and on other battlefields new honours were shed upon these Colours, and now the 18th Battalion, with the religious sentiment which is ever characteristic of the British Army, has desired that this memorial should be laid up in the house of God. We thank them for bringing it here. With deep reverence we will guard it, and we pray with confidence and hope that they who, in the coming years and the coming generations, shall look upon these Colours, may recall with feelings of inexpressible gratitude the men whose high privilege it was by their lives, and still more by their deaths, to serve and save their country, and with it to save the world.'

After the address the Dean then received the Colours from Major D. E. Ince, M.C., and laid them on the altar, and the service concluded with the National Anthem. On returning to the Market-place, the cadre proceeded to Old Elvet for dismissal, and Major D. E. Ince received an ovation. The cadre remained overnight in Durham, thoroughly

appreciating the home-coming and the warm-hearted welcome of the North.

On May 28 the cadre proceeded to Ripon for dispersal, the officers going to Larkhill on Salisbury Plain; and the Battalion, for which all its officers, non-commissioned officers and men felt such sincere affection, and in which one and all took such a whole-hearted and justifiable pride, was finally disbanded after nearly five years of true and loyal labour in the service of its King and country.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS

TO THE

18TH (S.) BATT. DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY (COUNTY)

The EARL OF DURHAM, K.G., etc., Lambton Castle, Fence Houses.
Colonel R. BURDON, V.D., M.P., J.P., Castle Eden.
Mrs. MATTHEW GRAY.
Sir LINDSAY WOOD, Bart., The Hermitage, Chester-le-Street.
The Executors of the late Sir STEPHEN FURNESS, Baltic Chambers, West Hartlepool.
Colonel H. DOUGHTY, J.P., Seaton Carew.
C. E. HUNTER, Esq., Wemmergill, Middleton-in-Teesdale.
Colonel Sir ROBERT ROPNER, Bart., Preston Hall, near Stockton-on-Tees.
A. F. PEASE, Esq., J.P., Middleton Lodge, Middleton Tyas.
The Right Hon. H. PIKE PEASE, M.P., House of Commons.
Colonel J. H. ROPNER, V.D., J.P., Ragworth, Norton-on-Tees.
Colonel C. W. DARWIN, C.B., J.P., Dryburn, Durham.
R. HUTTON WILSON, Esq., Egglescliffe S.O.
F. FENWICK, Esq., J.P., Forester's Lodge, Wolsingham.
W. O. WOOD, Esq., J.P., South Hetton.
Colonel ROBERTS, Hollingside, Durham.
W. SEWELL, Esq., Manor House, North Bridge Street, Sunderland.
JOHN FEETHAM, Esq., Whinfield, Darlington.

S. T. Coulson, Esq., Church Street, West Hartlepool.
Gerard Salvin, Esq., Croxdale Hall, Durham.
J. T. Scott, Esq., Thornley.
Jonathan Angus, Esq., J.P., Castle Eden.
J. A. Hildyard, Esq., J.P., Hutton Bonville Hall, Northallerton.
Sir Thomas Wrightson, Bart., J.P., Neasham Hall, Darlington.
Sir William Cresswell Gray, Bart., D.L., J.P., Thorp Perrow, Bedale.
Viscount Boyne, Brancepeth Castle, Durham.
J. Westoll, Esq., J.P., The Cloisters, Sunderland.
H. H. Clark, Esq., Southwick Engine Works, Sunderland.
Anthony Wilkinson, Esq., J.P., Sheraton, Castle Eden.
Lord Barnard, Raby Castle, Darlington.
F. Stobart, Esq., Selaby Hall, Gainford.
Sir Hugh Bell, Bart., J.P., Rounton Grange, Northallerton.
M. H. Horsley, Esq., J.P., Brinkburn, West Hartlepool.
Sir H. Williamson, Bart., J.P., Whitburn Hall, Sunderland.
J. E. Rogerson, Esq., J.P., Mount Oswald, Durham.
George Jones, Esq., Meadowcroft, West Hartlepool.
Henry Salvin, Esq., Burn Hall, Durham.
A. R. G. Thompson, Esq., Walworth Hall, Darlington.
His Honour Judge Greenwell, Greenwell Ford, Lanchester.
Miss B. Baker, Elemore Hall, Durham.
Sir F. Brown, J.P., Norton-on-Tees.
Miss Allgood, The Hermitage, Hexham.
J. M. Watson, Esq., Gisburn House, Hartlepool.
J. H. B. Forster, Esq., J.P., Whitworth House, Spennymoor.
C. Wynn Tilly, Esq., Snape Castle, Bedale.
B. M. Brough, Esq., Seaton, Sunderland.
J. H. H. Clarke, Esq., J.P., Redhill, Whitburn, Sunderland.
C. R. Barrett, Esq., J.P., Whitehill Hall, Pelton Fell.
J. Harrison, c/o Seaham Harbour Engine Works.
W. Clarke & Son, Chester-le-Street.
Colonel W. H. Challoner, J.P., Warden Law, Houghton-le-Spring.
A. B. Horsley, Esq., Hurworth Grange, Croft.

APPENDIX II

The following telegrams and messages of congratulation were received at different dates. A few extracts from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *History of the War* and also from the *Times* are included.

(1) Page 42. From G.O.C. Fourth Army, 1.7.16 :

'In wishing all ranks good luck, the Army Commander desires to impress on all infantry units the supreme importance of helping one another and holding on tight to every yard of ground gained. The accurate and sustained fire of the artillery during the bombardment should greatly assist the task of the infantry.'

From G.O.C. Eighth Corps, 1.7.16 :

'My greetings to every officer, non-commissioned officer and man of Thirty-first Division. Yours is a glorious task in the battle. Stick it out, push on each to his objective, and you will win a glorious victory and a name in history. I rejoice to be associated with you as your Corps Commander.'

From G.O.C. R.A., Thirty-first Division, 1.7.16 :

'The G.O.C. R.A. and all gunners in Thirty-first Division wish you good luck and intend to back you up with all their power to-day.'

From G.O.C. Eighth Corps, 2.7.16 :

'Well done, my comrades of Thirty-first Division. Your discipline and determination were magnificent, and it was bad luck that temporarily robbed you of success.'

Eighth Corps Bulletin, noon, 3.7.16 :

'Now that reports from the whole attacking fronts of the French and British have been collected and collated, it is abundantly clear that the Eighth Corps contributed very materially to the success of the offensive as a whole, by its close engagement of the large enemy forces that had been concentrated against it.

'The enemy had evidently marked down the Eighth Corps front as the sector on which a special thrust was to be feared, and had reinforced their line both in men and material in preparation for the threatened attack.

'To the Eighth Corps, therefore, fell the honourable though costly task of holding a large enemy force immobilised whilst other Corps, both French and English, profited by the diversion to the full, and were able to drive in the enemy lines to the very satisfactory extent shown on the sketch map.[1]

'That the Eighth Corps stands where it did on the map is the natural outcome of the special duty that fell to its lot, and gives a measure of the magnitude of its task and the sacrifices made to fulfil it.

'Train, troop and other movements, since reported in rear of the enemy on our front, would seem to show that they still regard themselves threatened, and that they have been forced to bring up heavy reinforcements to make good the losses inflicted by the Eighth Corps attack.

'The prisoners taken on and since July 1st by the French and British now total upwards of 10,000, whilst a number of guns have also been secured.

'This, considered together with the ground won and the heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy, points to a very substantial Allied success even at this early stage of the operations.'

From G.O.C. Eighth Corps, 4.7.16. To all ranks in Eighth Corps :

'In so big a command as an Army Corps of four Divisions it is impossible for me to come round all the front line trenches and all billets to see every man as I wish to do. You must

[1] Not included in this book.

take the will for the deed and accept this message in place of the spoken word.

'It is difficult for me to express my admiration for the splendid courage, determination, and discipline displayed by the Battalions that took part in the great attack on Beaumont Hamel-Serre position on July 1st. All observers agree in stating that the various waves of men issued from their trenches and moved forward at the appointed time in perfect order, undismayed by the heavy artillery fire and deadly machine-gun fire. There were no cowards, no waverers, and not a man fell out. It was a magnificent display of disciplined courage worthy of the best traditions of the British race.

'Thirty-first "New Army" Division and Forty-eighth Territorial Division, by the heroism and discipline displayed in this battle, have proved themselves worthy to fight by the side of such Regular Divisions as Fourth and Twenty-ninth. There can be no higher praise.

'We had the most difficult part of the line to attack. The Germans had fortified it with skill and immense labour for many months. They had kept their best troops there and had assembled north, east, and south-east of it a formidable collection of artillery and machine-guns.

'By your splendid attack you held these enemy forces here in the north and so enabled our friends in the south, both British and French, to achieve the brilliant success they have had. Therefore, though we did not do all we hoped to do, you have more than pulled your weight, and you and our even more glorious comrades, who have preceded us across the Great Divide, have nobly done their duty.

'We have got to stick it out and go on hammering. Next time we attack, if it please God, we will not only pull our weight but pull off a big thing. With such troops as you, who are determined to succeed, we are certain of winning through to a glorious victory.

'I salute each officer, non-commissioned officer and man of Fourth, Twenty-ninth, Thirty-first, Forty-eighth as a comrade in arms, and I rejoice to have the privilege of commanding such a band of heroes as Eighth Corps have proved themselves to be.'

From G.O.C. Eighth Corps, 5.7.16 :

'Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston desires all ranks to know that General Joffre has expressed his appreciation of the hard fighting carried out by the troops on the British left. "It is greatly due to the fact that the Germans were so strong and so well provided with guns in front of Seventh and Eighth Corps, that the French and British troops, in touch with them on the right of the Fourth Army, were able to make their brilliant and successful advance." Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston concurs most heartily in these appreciative words of General Joffre.'

From a Northern Newspaper :

'NORTH-COUNTRYMEN ON THE SOMME, JULY 1, 1916

'In the recent volume of Sir A. Conan Doyle's *History of the War*, the detailed description of the Somme offensive of 1916 is of particular interest. Sir Arthur's story of the advance of the Thirty-first Division on July 1, 1916, is one that may be elaborated with advantage later. But for the moment it lifts the veil on a scene, which hitherto has been hidden from the people at home most intimately concerned with it. . . .

'"The Thirty-first Division," he says, "was on the left of the Eighth Corps, and had Serre for its objective. Of this Division, two Brigades, the 93rd and 94th, were in the line with the 92nd in reserve.

'"HOW THE PALS WENT OVER

'"The 93rd, which consisted of 15th, 16th, 18th West Yorkshires and the 18th Durhams, was on the right, and the advance was made upon a front of two companies, each company with a front of two platoons, the men extended to three paces interval. . . .

'"These grand North-countrymen swept across No Man's Land, dressed as if on parade, followed in succession by the remaining Battalions. 'I have never seen, and could not have imagined, such a magnificent display of gallantry, discipline, and determination,' said a General who was present.

'"The men fell in lines, but the survivors, with backs bent, heads bowed, and rifles at the port, neither quickened nor slackened their advance, but went forward as though it was rain and not lead which lashed them. Here and elsewhere the German machine-gunners not only lined the parapet, but actually rushed forward into the open, partly to get a flank fire and partly to come in front of the British barrage. Before the blasts of bullets the lines melted away, and the ever-decreasing waves only reached the parapet here and there, lapping over the spot where the German front lines had been, and sinking for ever on the farther side." '

(2) Page 46. From G.O.C. Eleventh Corps, 29.7.16 :

'Please convey to all ranks of 18th Durham Light Infantry my appreciation of their steady conduct in repelling the German raid on the night 27th-28th.'

From G.O.C. Thirty-first Division, 29.7.16 :

'In forwarding the Corps Commander's congratulations to 18th Durham Light Infantry, the G.O.C. Division wishes to add his own on their fine performance. The number of dead Germans lying in front of their line is a practical proof of their fighting powers.'

From G.O.C. 93rd Infantry Brigade, 29.7.16 :

'I congratulate all ranks of the Battalion on the fine fight put up after such a severe bombardment, and on the way in which they drove off the enemy without his being able to obtain a single identification.'

(*3a*) Page 64. ATTACK ON SERRE, 13.11.16.

The following gracious telegram was received from His Majesty the King by General Sir Douglas Haig :

'I heartily congratulate you upon the great success achieved by my gallant troops during the past three days in the advance on both sides of the Ancre. This further capture of the enemy's front line trenches, under special difficulties owing to the recent wet weather, redounds to the credit of all ranks.'

From G.O.C. Fifth Army to Thirty-first Division, 13.11.16 :

'The Army Commander wishes to thank all officers and men of Thirty-first Division for the gallant way in which they held their position in the German lines throughout the day. No troops could have done more to ensure success.'

From G.O.C. Fifth Corps to Thirty-first Division, 14.11.16 :

'Please assure Thirty-first Division that their gallant attack yesterday is more than appreciated by the Corps Commander and all ranks of Fifth Corps.'

From G.O.C. Fifth Army to Thirty-first Division, 15.11.16 :

'The Army Commander wishes to thank all ranks for their splendid efforts under the most difficult circumstances. The great victory which was won will have very far-reaching effects. To this success all the troops engaged have contributed to the utmost of their power. Great results have been achieved, and the Army Commander's confidence in the leaders and troops under his command has been more than justified.'

From Commander-in-Chief to Thirty-first Division, 15.11.16 :

'The Commander-in-Chief warmly congratulates you and your troops on the great results of your operations of the last few days. Under such difficulties of ground the achievement is all the greater. The accuracy and rapidity of the artillery fire, and the full advantage taken of it by the infantry were admirable.'

Following message received from General Gough commanding Fifth Army :

'Please congratulate Thirty-first Division upon its excellent work during the past week, and especially upon the capture of the Garde Stellung.'

APPENDIX II

The following received from Thirty-first Division and 93rd Infantry Brigade :

'Divisional Commander wishes to convey his congratulations to the 18th Durham Light Infantry and 18th West Yorks Regiment for the good work these Battalions did yesterday.'

'The Brigadier-General wishes to endorse the above message and add his very best thanks to all ranks.'

The following is an extract of a letter from an officer of the County Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry :

'Many thanks for the cigarettes and sweets, which have arrived and are much appreciated by the men, who have just come out after a week's hard fighting. We took the famous salient mentioned in the *Times* about March 2. This was handed over after consolidation of the village to another Brigade. We then took a famous ridge running between the village and a wood named after a bird (Bois de Rossignol), which caused many hours of hard fighting. This ridge commands all the country, both on the Boche side and on our own, and renders all our side out of view for transport, and has made him retreat far more rapidly than he ever meant to, as is shown by his heavy bombardments and burning of war material, dug-outs, etc.

'We are only out, I expect, for a day or two.'

'Brigade, Division, Corps, Army. These have all sent the Colonel most pleasing messages about the regiment.'

Extract from the *Times*, dated Headquarters, Feb. 27, 1917 :

'There was, for example, some hard fighting between Gommecourt and Puisieux. In every case the enemy was forced to continue his retreat. Nightingale Wood, south-east of Gommecourt, was the scene of the heaviest engagement. We now occupy part of it. It was a clever and successful little action.'

The following is an extract from the *Times*, March 1, 1917:

'Headquarters, Wednesday.—Our men who died last July

in the attempt to carry Gommecourt now have their sacrifice justified, and that famous salient, which includes the historic château and park of Gommecourt, has fallen, and it fell to the logic of circumstances last night, and was acquired by peaceful penetration.

'Puisieux is also ours, but for that we had some stiff street fighting. We are now beyond that town, and the positions of outposts are at present on an approximate north-west and south-east line running from Gommecourt by Nightingale Wood, and on eastwards by the north of Puisieux. The Gommecourt salient is also clear to the north. The Germans hang on boldly to Nightingale Wood while their troops retreat from the salient. There is a great deal of obscure fighting in that copse, where men fight each other from tree to tree, and where the greater initiative and resource of some active and crafty North-Countrymen cause serious losses to the enemy. The Boche, though he fought well, proved inferior in the street fighting of Puisieux.'

(*From Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'History'*)

'By a pleasing coincidence 31st Division which occupied Serre was the same brave North Country Division which had lost so heavily upon July 1 and November 13 on the same front. On entering the village, they actually found the bodies of some of their own brave comrades who had got as far forward seven months before.'

Records of messages of congratulation received 15.11.16 to 2.4.18 cannot be traced.

(3*b*) Page 77. GAVRELLE

(*From Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'History'*)

'On May 3, 93rd Infantry Brigade got off well and had reached its objective, but the successful German attack to the north exposed their flank to pressure upon their left rear. . . . For a time things were very critical, and the Windmill which commanded the village was retaken by the enemy. . . . One Company of 18th Durham Light Infantry under Lieutenant Hitchin was sent to retake the Windmill, which they did, but

were driven out by the shattering fire of the enemy. They re-formed at the foot of the slope and attacked and recaptured the Windmill once more, only to be driven out for the second time. Again they took the mill and this time they drove back the German counter-attack and held on to the position. Sixty out of the hundred in the British ranks had fallen, but when the battle painter of the future is in search for a subject, he will find none better than that of the forty survivors under their boy leader, wearied and blood-stained, but victorious in their shot-torn mill.'

(4) Page 110. Ayette Ridge, March 1918
(*From the 'Times'*)

'SOME FAMOUS DIVISIONS

'In the last two days the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has mentioned a number of new Divisions as having particularly distinguished themselves in the battle. In my despatches I have already told something of the story of the fighting of each of these Divisions, though without giving their identity. The Eighth Division had two days' extremely hard work and had to bear the brunt of one of the heaviest German attacks. The Thirty-first had to stand against three[1] German divisions, and held and beat them back again and again.

'These incidents have already had their place in the general narrative of the battle as I have tried to tell it, and all deserve to be immortal. And again I would say, what I have said before, that these things are only samples of what it is no shade of exaggeration to call the absolutely heroic behaviour of our men everywhere. You already know how fierce a struggle has gone on for days in the theatre of Ervillers and Mory, north of Bapaume, and the Germans have made almost infinitesimal progress. With three divisions the Germans failed to make any headway against one British Division, and against that same Division elements of at least two others have been put in during the last thirty-six hours.

'After having lost and retaken, and again lost and retaken,

[1] Actually *five*.

Mory, we had finally fallen back to a line behind it. On Sunday night the Germans began attacking from Ervillers with new troops. Two attacks were delivered on Sunday night by battalions of the 91st Reserve Regiment, and both were thrown back with very heavy losses. Then, on Monday morning, troops of the 2nd Guards Reserve Division came in, and there was a time when it looked as if they would get through. But our men fought like tigers, or, even more, like men, and this attack was no more successful than its predecessors.

'Failing here, the enemy then threw his weight a little farther south, and struck at Gomiecourt, which is still on the front of the same British Division which had beaten off former attempts. In this area some Lancashire and Yorkshire troops had hard fighting. These fought like everybody else (it is a way our men have), and this final thrust was also beaten off. Then, tired (so tired that the officers could hardly stand or talk), and diminished in numbers, but still full of fight and glory, these units were given an opportunity to rest.

'Here, writing from the spot and finding words incapable of expressing all one wants to say, one has an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps you people at home will think that a correspondent talks too much of the valour of our men when that valour ends always in withdrawal. Yet history, I believe, when all is known, will be amazed at what British troops have done here in the last five days. I have yet to hear of a unit which has not borne itself bravely, or to hear an officer speak in terms other than those of the utmost gratitude and admiration for his men. The mere physical strain has been enormous, but men come out of the line clinging to the last to the one definite notion that their business is to go on fighting and kill Germans.

'In the north there has been extremely heavy fighting round Boisleux, Boiry, Ablainzeville and Moyenneville ; and it will be noticed that this is the area where we have been fighting for three days now, so little progress has the enemy made here.

'Between Ablainzeville and Moyenneville is some high ground before Ayette, which the Germans have made repeated

and desperate attempts to capture. More than once they have been in possession of part of the ground, and have been driven out again. There is a similar local rise between Boyelles and Boisleux which the Germans made a determined attempt to take this morning, and were brilliantly driven back by a counter-attack. Yet a third attack by Boisleux was similarly hammered and beaten back.'

'*Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch:* In addition to those British Divisions which have already been mentioned, exceptional gallantry has been shown also by the following: Eighth Division, Eighteenth Division, Thirty-first Division, Forty-first Division, Sixty-first Division, Sixty-third Division, and Sixty-sixth Division.'

From G.O.C. Sixth Army Corps, 2.4.18:

'The Sixth Corps Commander wishes to convey to all ranks of Thirty-first Division on their leaving his Corps, his appreciation of the work done by them whilst under his command. The portion of the Corps front held by this Division was a very important one. Its present satisfactory situation is due to the tenacity with which this front was held.'

From G.O.C. Third Army to Thirty-first Division, 5.4.18:

'G.O.C. Third Army wishes to express to this Division on their leaving his command, his appreciation of their conduct in the battles near Arras. By their gallantry and determination they helped to break up the most overwhelming attacks we have been subjected to during this war, and have borne a very noble share in preventing the enemy from obtaining a decisive victory.'

From G.O.C. 93rd Infantry Brigade, 7.4.18:

'The Brigadier-General in forwarding the attached message wishes to join in the expression of admiration of the work of the Battalion under your command during the recent operations.'

Attached message addressed to the Commander-in-Chief:

'At the demonstration by the Mid Tyne Branches it was resolved to telegraph to you conveying to our comrades at the battle-front our profound admiration of their magnificent heroism in resisting the onslaughts of the enemy, and desiring to be kindly remembered to Durham Battalions.'

(From Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'History')

'At the beginning of the struggle 31st Division carried a high reputation into this great battle, and at the end an even higher one out of it. . . . On March 28 the battle was still raging in front of 31st Division which had now been engaged for four days without a break and had beaten off the attacks of five separate German divisions. On this date two attacks were made, one upon 93rd Infantry Brigade, the other upon the Guards. Each attack got into the line and each was pitchforked out again. So broken was the enemy that they were seen retiring in crowds towards the north-east under a canopy of shrapnel. The British barrage was particularly good that day, and many assaulting units were beaten into pieces by it. The Division was terribly worn and the men could hardly stand for exhaustion, and yet it was a glad thought that the last glimpse which their weary and bloodshot eyes had of their enemy was his broken hordes as they streamed away from the front which they had failed to break. . . .

'Upon the 30th, 31st Division was able to withdraw, having established a record which may have been equalled, but cannot have been surpassed by any division in this great battle. Five German divisions, 111th German Division, 2nd Guards Reserve, 239th and 16th Bavarian, and 1st Guards Reserve had been wholly or partially engaged with 31st Division. Both sides had lost heavily and were exhausted. It was here, near Ervillers, that a German war correspondent has described how he saw the long line of German and British wounded lying upon either side of the main road.'

APPENDIX II

AYETTE RIDGE

Hope on, fight on,
The struggle unending, the battle long.
Hope on, fight on,
To raise the weak and abase the strong,
To stand for right and to right the wrong,
Freeing the slave from the tyrant's thong.
Hope on, fight on.
As you pass along
Through the blood and mud of the battling throng,
Hope on, fight on.
This your slogan and deathless song,
Hope on, fight on.
To-morrow ? What is the morn to you ?
To-day be steadfast and brave and true,
And the living will give the dead their due.
Hope on, fight on.

The above was composed by a member of the Battalion on the Ayette Ridge during the intervals between the enemy's attacks.

(5) Page 117. Battle of the Lys

Sir Douglas Haig's Order of the Day during the Battle of the Lys :

'Three weeks ago to-day the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a fifty-mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Cinque Ports and destroy the British Army.

'In spite of throwing already 106 divisions into the battle and enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has, as yet, made little progress towards his goals. We owe this to the determined fighting and self-sacrifice of our troops.

'Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our army under the most trying circumstances.

'Many amongst us are now tired. To these I would say that victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest.

'The French Army is moving rapidly and in great force to our support.

'There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man : there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end.

'The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.'

From G.O.C. First Army, 13.4.18 :

(5) 'I wish to express my appreciation of the great bravery and endurance with which all ranks have fought and held out during the last five days against overwhelming numbers. It has been necessary to call for great exertions and more must still be asked for, but I am confident that at this critical period, when the existence of the British Army is at stake, all ranks of the First Army will do their very best.'

From G.O.C. Second Army, 14.4.18 :

'The Army Commander wishes to congratulate all the troops that have been engaged in the recent heavy fighting on their stubborn and determined resistance. He realises the severe test that they have been put to, and the steadiness that they have displayed reflects the greatest credit on them.'

From G.O.C. 19th Infantry Brigade, 14.4.18:

'I thank you most heartily for the invaluable assistance which you so willingly gave me at a critical moment of the fight, and ask you to tell the men how highly I rate their gallant conduct and indefatigable work.'

From G.O.C. British Armies in France and Flanders to General Plumer, G.O.C. Second Army :

'The magnificent performance of Thirty-first Division in holding up the enemy's advance at a critical stage of the Lys battle has already been publicly acknowledged. I wish

to add my personal tribute to the fine fighting qualities displayed by this Division, both on that occasion and also during the opening battle south of Arras. Please convey my thanks to the General Officer Commanding and to all ranks of his command.'

From G.O.C. Second Army, 17.4.18 :

'The Army Commander wishes to place on record his appreciation of the gallant conduct of the troops under your command in the present fighting. It is worthy of all praise, and he wishes all ranks to be informed.'

From G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps to Thirty-first Division, 17.4.18 :

'The Corps Commander wishes you to convey to the troops of your Division his appreciation of their courage and resolution during the period April 12-14 when opposed to greatly superior numbers. The fine stand on April 13 by your Brigades when much depleted had an important bearing on the course of the operations.'

From G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps to Thirty-first Division, 23.4.18 :

'The Corps Commander at a meeting of Divisional Commanders on April 18 expressed the Commander-in-Chief's congratulations on the fine work of Thirty-first Division, especially on April 13, in saving a critical situation. He wishes to thank this Division personally, as he considered the work done really magnificent. The troops of Thirty-first Division by their stout defence covered the detrainment of First Australian Division and saved Hazebrouck. The history of the British Army can contain nothing finer than the story of the action April 12 and 13.'

General de Lisle commanding Fifteenth Corps: 'The history of the British Army can record nothing finer than the story of 4th Guards Brigade on April 12 and 13.'

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle adds : 'Whilst 4th Guards

Brigade of 31st Division had made their firm stand to the east of Hazebrouck, the rest of 31st Division covering a front of 9000 yards had a most desperate battle with the German storm troops. The fine North Country material which makes up 92nd and 93rd Brigades had never been more highly tried, for they were little more than a long line of skirmishers with an occasional post. In some parts of the line they were absolutely exterminated, but, like their comrades of the Guards, they managed somehow or other to retain the positions and prevent a penetration. It has been calculated that the line held by 31st Division upon these days was $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and that it was attacked by 35th and 42nd German Divisions, 1st Bavarian Reserve and 10th, 11th, 81st Reserve Divisions.'

Thirty-first Division at Bailleul, Meteren and Nieppe Forest, April 1918

(*From the 'Times'*)

'The Commander-in-Chief, in a special despatch, has mentioned fourteen divisions for their gallantry in the recent fighting. There had already been fifteen such mentions, but as two of those now named—namely, the Third and the Thirty-first Divisions[1]—had already appeared among the first fifteen, the total now honoured in this way has been twenty-seven Divisions. Of these, twenty-three are made up of troops from the British Isles, three of Australians, and one of New Zealanders.

'The Thirty-first had already been mentioned by the Commander-in-Chief for their splendid fighting from March 24 onwards in the Ablainzeville-Moyenneville area and about Mory and Ervillers. Hardly out of the battle here, they were, as you have now been told, before the forest of Nieppe, where the centre of our line gave way on April 9. The Commander-in-Chief has given details of their achievement, and it is worth remarking that our line still runs in front of the forest of Nieppe.

[1] Almost immediately afterwards the 31st Division was mentioned for the third time.

'On April 13 the Thirty-first Division was holding a front of some 9000 yards, east of the Forêt de Nieppe. The Division was already greatly reduced in strength as the result of previous fighting, and the enemy was still pressing his advance. The troops were informed that their line had to be held to the last to cover the detraining of reinforcements, and all ranks responded with the most magnificent courage and devotion to the appeal made to them. Throughout a long day of incessant fighting they beat off a succession of determined attacks. In the evening the enemy made a last great effort, and by sheer weight of numbers overran certain portions of our line, the defenders of which died fighting, but would not give ground. Those of the enemy who had broken through at these points were, however, met and driven back beyond our line by the reinforcing troops, which by this time had completed their detrainment.

'Since Friday the Thirty-first Division had held positions behind Vieux Berquin towards Meteren, where the Germans in repeated attacks have failed to gain any ground. These troops came into battle tired and under adverse conditions, and since then they have fought a difficult fight with great stoutness and gallantry.

'The desperate attempts to break our defence before Bailleul and Meteren were equally futile, and to-day we still hold all the places mentioned and positions well to the east and south of them.

'One post of Durhams especially is spoken of as holding up the advance and killing great numbers of Germans, till at last a mere remnant of them fought their way back through the waves which already encircled them.

'In the area south of Meteren, from west of Bailleul towards Strazeele, mixed English and Scottish troops, including Durham Light Infantry and Scottish Rifles, held the Germans back from noon on April 12 until mid-day yesterday without giving a yard, though we know that the attacking Germans had imperative orders three days ago to seize the line of the Bailleul-Meteren road, and that Kemmel was to have fallen long ago. In the fighting here at one time all sorts of mis-

cellaneous units were employed in the fighting line, and helped doggedly to hold the enemy back. The whole country below Meteren is one German cemetery, except that the dead are still unburied, and one hears of machine-gun barrels having to be again and again renewed as, day after day, the Germans continued to come on over open ground.'

Meteren

(From the 'Times')

'Yesterday afternoon two more attacks were delivered on the whole of this front from east of Neuve Église to south of Meteren with the object, as already explained, of reaching the heights west and north. The German soldiers, we know, had definite orders to break through the line of the main road from Flêtre by Meteren to Bailleul, and to hold it at all cost. They did their best, wave after wave of them, but they failed; and struggles of the most savage character took place at some points, especially about the clump of ruined buildings known as Steam Mill,[1] 1000 yards or so south of the road. Nowhere did they get any nearer, and their losses were very heavy.

'Late last night they tried again, and for a moment it looked as if in the confusion of the darkness they had turned our positions in the Meteren area and got through; but once again they were driven back, and the line closed up.

'During the night the artillery fire was terrific all night long, and throughout this morning there was tremendous shelling of all this front. Our guns here, however, are splendid, and the German has no advantage in this respect. Late this forenoon the enemy concentrations massing for renewed attack on the Bailleul-Meteren front were broken by our artillery, and no attack followed.

'Bitter Fight at Bailleul

'Still north of here, I believe, the front is also in a blaze. The essential fact, however, is that the Germans have, appar-

[1] Just south-west of Bailleul.

ently, diverted the main weight of their attack to this northern sector, and how heavy that attack has been here is, perhaps, best illustrated by the fact that at Bailleul they threw last night the mass of three divisions on the line held by us with six battalions. Our men seem to have fought most stubbornly, gradually falling back into the smoking ruins of the town of Bailleul, where savage fighting went on through the night, and only in the early hours of the morning, between midnight and dawn, were they drawn back to the line north of the town, where they have withstood further attacks to-day. Our positions west of here, by Meteren, were involved in the struggle, and hard fighting has been going on there this morning, but so far without our yielding any ground.

'It has become trite and commonplace to say that, as a nation, we believe ourselves to show to the best in adversity, but I had no idea how true it was of the individuals of all classes and kinds until I saw the bearing of our Army under its late experiences. The mere physical hardships that our men have been through are almost incredible, but however tired each man may be, and whatever may have happened to his own platoon or company or battalion or battery, he remains, when he can hardly stagger, full of pride and confidence that he is a better man than the enemy, and that we are surely winning the war.

'That those who are in high places and take the larger view should think this is intelligible, but, with his necessarily limited vision, that every individual soldier should have this same unfailing cheeriness and immortal courage is a thing to marvel at.

'The enemy in the course of yesterday continued his efforts to get to Mont Kemmel. That he did not succeed I can once more vouch for by the fact that it was from one of the sister hills in that region that this morning I again watched what it is possible to see of the battle. One really sees little, but the flat land lies before you, cut up into farms, and the villages of Bailleul and Meteren are in plain view beyond. Our line this morning ran on this side of Bailleul and practically through Meteren.

'VIEW OF BAILLEUL

'Bailleul itself bears much less the appearance of being ruined than might be supposed, in view of the shelling it has undergone and the fires which have been burning in the town. The mass of walls and roofs this morning presented a fairly intact appearance, and the large, bell-shaped tower of the Town Hall and the needle of the pointed spire of the church still stand. On this side of Bailleul, close by where our lines ran, though invisible to the eye, a large square farm building was on fire, throwing up great sheets of flame, while from several other lesser fires at various points columns of white smoke, more continuous than the fumes of shell-bursts, drifted slowly across the landscape. But for the smoke and noise there was no evidence of a battle, for except when an attack is in progress armies nowadays make themselves amazingly invisible.

'After the failure of his attacks yesterday, the enemy was supposed to be just about to begin a new attack when we were there, but no infantry advance took place. Shelling was only moderately heavy on his side, and his shooting seemed to be very dispersed and random over farmlands and village areas alike. Our guns were more active than his, and their roar and the whistle of the shells completely dominated any noise of German shell-bursts.

'The German attacks on this front yesterday were really heavy and pushed with determination. At least one new division appeared in the line, and apparently two, while two other divisions formerly withdrawn from the fighting have been pushed in again. In all now sixteen German divisions, and perhaps seventeen, have been used on this front from Hollebeke to Merris, on which—that is, from Armentières northwards—the enemy had only three divisions in line when the attack began on April 9. The attacks yesterday were made in successive waves, and were less one operation on the whole front than three separate drives, one being aimed westward towards Kemmel from the Wulverghem direction, one north-westward between Bailleul and Dranoutre, and one

north round Meteren. All were beaten off without any loss of ground.

'In some places the effort was much less determined than some former attacks, and it is conjectured that the divisions which have been put in a second time fought poorly. The first of the three attacks, direct towards Kemmel, was made in great strength, and our men are satisfied that the enemy losses were very heavy. In the third attack round Meteren also there was a bitter struggle. The Germans have been in Meteren more than once now, but it is doubtful if any were there this morning; we had posts on the northern edge of the place, but practically the whole village is No Man's Land, artillery fire from one side or the other making the ruins almost untenable.'

The following letter, written while in the line at Meteren, was received by Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes, T.D.:

'My dear Colonel—The Battalion has had very heavy fighting during the days 11–15 April around Meteren. The story was shortly as follows: On 11th we were very suddenly ordered to do a counter-attack in the evening together with another battalion. The counter-attack was magnificent and advanced 2000 yards deep on a front of 1600 yards, hamlets, prisoners, and machine-guns being taken. The following morning the Boche had his revenge in full and we had to give up a series of defences on a two-Brigade front, though he paid very heavily for all he gained. His cyclists, cyclist M.G.'s, and mounted men all took part, and so he moved at a tremendous pace, while his numbers were absolutely overwhelming, five and a half divisions against our one Division. They enveloped the right of the unit on our right and thus exposed our flank. Well, our Brigade hung well together but was forced north-west, while our other Brigade was driven west. There was a long rearguard action throughout the day; during this we were the rear party and the Battalion fought stoutly. Finally, we got into a good position on the Meteren-Bailleul line, but especially defending Meteren. There was no trench, so we at once dug rifle-pits and Boche funked coming on, so we

improved these and joined them into section posts. Next day he had his guns and "how's" up and gave us a bad time for two or three hours—on the parapet, in the trenches, but comparatively few casualties. We dug in and linked up most of the posts, but in parts water prevented more than 3-inch depth. Next morning he started early. We had heard from prisoners the night before that two divisions had definite orders that they were to capture M——n,[1] so we knew there would be a lively day. He really gave us a vile time, 9-5 P.M., with the heaviest stuff of all descriptions, but again with few casualties. About 5 P.M. he tried coming over but got it very hot indeed, and only succeeded in getting a far advanced line of groups and was no nearer M——n. We were very much pleased that night, and the previous night our men had done some very valuable patrolling, got contact with the enemy and sized up the situation. On one day our Brigade amounted to little over 400, but along with two other skeleton Battalions of 19th Infantry Brigade, kept back a two-division attack of the enemy. Tilly, who was commanding 15th West Yorkshire Regiment, was killed outright by a shell-splinter in his heart, while gallantly commanding his Battalion. We buried him in a farm-garden near. He had done splendid work in trying to prevent his right flank being turned. 15th West Yorks liked him very much and are most sorry about it.

17.4.18. '——.'

(6) Page 124. From G.O.C. Second Army, 27.6.18 :

'Please congratulate all troops concerned on the success of operations last night.'

From G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps, 27.6.18 :

'Hearty congratulations on your successful operation. Please convey my appreciation to the troops.'

From G.O.C. 93rd Infantry Brigade, 27.6.18 :

'The Brigadier-General wishes to send his hearty congratulations on the success of the operations last night. The

[1] Meteren.

gallantry and skill with which they were carried out reflects great credit on all ranks.'

Capture of La Becque

(From the 'Times')

'English troops have, by what Sir Douglas Haig describes as "a successful minor operation," advanced our line east of the forest of Nieppe to an average depth of nearly a mile on a front of about three and a half miles. The hamlets of L'Epinette, Verte Rue, and La Becque[1] were captured, together with over 300 prisoners and 22 machine-guns. At the same time Australian troops captured some hostile posts west of Merris and took 43 prisoners and six machine-guns. . . .

'Attacking on a front of between three and four miles eastward from the forest of Nieppe, at 6 o'clock this morning, we pushed our line forward for a distance of about 1500 yards. It was an altogether satisfactory operation, and netted us about 300 prisoners, with a good number of machine-guns.

'For some time our line has rested immediately along the eastern edge of the forest of Nieppe, with the little stream Plate Becque running almost parallel to our front, about 1500 yards away. For various reasons it was decided to clear the ground up to the stream and hold the line of the stream itself. This is what we did, with light casualties.

'It was a fine morning, with the first southerly breeze we have had for a long time. The attack was preceded by a short bombardment, the troops engaged being chiefly men from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Durham, and the Northern counties, with some Southern English units co-operating.

'The advance was equally successful at all points. The enemy's trench line in the ground before the stream was cleared with the bayonet, and the machine-guns which were captured in it were turned on the enemy. On the main front of attack over 250 prisoners were taken, and about forty more fell into the hands of the troops who attacked on the left.

'The prisoners taken were partly Saxons of the Thirty-second

[1] These hamlets are near Vieux Berquin.

division and partly Prussians of the 44th, and from both we got confirmation of the tales which we have heard of the prevalence of influenza in the German Army. Reports have been current for some time past that the malady was sufficiently serious to have constituted one reason why the Germans have been so slow in pushing the offensive, divisions intended for the attack being so prostrated as to be unable to fight. The information given by these prisoners supports this story. They say that the disease is widespread in all departments of the Army.'

(7) Page 125. From Commander-in-Chief to Thirty-first Division, 29.6.19 :

'The Commander-in-Chief congratulates all ranks of Thirty-first Division on the successful operations carried out by them yesterday, which he considers reflect great credit on all concerned.'

From G.O.C. Second Army, 29.6.18 :

'Hearty congratulations on your successful operations which took place yesterday. Please communicate to all ranks under your command.'

From G.O.C. Eleventh Corps, 29.6.18 :

'G.O.C.'s First and Second Armies have sent me messages of congratulation on yesterday's successful operations. The Corps Commander has much pleasure in conveying these congratulations.'

From G.O.C. Thirty-first Division, 29.6.18 :

'I wish to thank you and the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men under your command for the splendid work that has been done during the recent operations, and to congratulate all ranks on the success obtained. There were difficulties which had to be contended with in the preparations owing to the short time available, but they were overcome by the keenness and goodwill of all ranks.

'I have not forgotten that, however well plans are made

by Commanders, it is upon the rank and file that the brunt of the battle falls, and it is very largely due to the splendid fighting qualities of the regimental officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, that the Division has achieved the successes of the last two days. Please convey to all ranks my thanks and high appreciation of their splendid work, and let them know that I am particularly gratified to feel that the first operations in which I have had the honour to command the Division have been so entirely successful.'

From G.O.C. 93rd Infantry Brigade, 29.6.18 :

'The Brigadier sends his heartiest congratulations.'

(8) Page 133. Bailleul and Meteren

(From the 'Times')

'Burning and Retreating

'I myself have been with the Northern Army during the last twenty-four hours, and have been through Bailleul and Meteren, and have seen the sky to the eastward ablaze all night and to-day, the horizon wreathed in smoke from fires which the enemy has started in village and town from Warneton in the north to south of Armentières. From end to end and from a score of other points as well it rose till, as the smoke drifted before the wind, the whole sector of the horizon was hidden behind the veil. The Germans are at their old work of destroying everything which they cannot hold, regardless of military justification for their acts. They will leave behind them in this northern country the same shameful wilderness as they left in their retreat after their defeat on the Somme a year and a half ago, and few things in this war have moved me as did the ruins of the beautiful town of Bailleul to-day.

'What five months ago was a thriving and lively town,[1] to-day is a ruin as complete as Ypres itself. There is no man in the British armies in France who does not know the great square of Bailleul, with the handsome Town Hall and its fine tower, and the Cathedral behind. Entering the place by road

[1] 14,000 inhabitants.

from the north to-day, well as I have known it, I could not be certain when I had reached that square. Where the wide-paved Grande Place had been was now only an open space of sand and tumbled stone and masonry. There is not enough left of the Town Hall by which to recognise it, nor does anything stand of the Cathedral but a few jutting fragments. So incredible did it seem that this was indeed Bailleul Square that I had to ask one of the only other two figures moving in the waste (two French official photographers) if it was the Place, and between us we tried to identify the old locations where once stood the officers' club, the hotel, and so forth. It was a solid, prosperous town, which has taken much destroying. The houses were not like the village houses of lath and plaster, but of stout brick and stone, and now there is nothing but these acres of brick and stone broken and pounded into fragments, piled up in formless heaps and piles like sand-dunes, through which now wind littered, rock-strewn paths or tracks, where once were wide streets flanked by good houses. Never have I seen desolation more abominable.

'Meteren differs from Bailleul only in proportion as it was a smaller place, and, therefore, the ruin, though as complete, is less impressive. But Meteren is no longer even the skeleton of a town, but only so much of the earth's surface covered with raw, broken building stuffs. So we shall find it in all the area which the German is now evacuating with bitterness in his savage and brutal heart, as the smoke columns I have watched to-day and the fires which blazed all night sufficiently testify.'

(9) Page 138. From G.O.C. 92nd Infantry Brigade, 29.9.18 :

'G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps, who has been here to-day, has asked me to convey his congratulations to the Battalions engaged yesterday. He says: "It was the wedge we drove in yesterday on his south flank which caused the enemy to evacuate the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge this morning, and the fighting here was as hard as anywhere along the whole

front." G.O.C. Second Army has wired his very hearty congratulations also.'

(10) Page 139. From G.O.C. 92nd Infantry Brigade, 30.9.18 :

'G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps has sent me the following wire : "G.O.C. Fifteenth Corps wishes to congratulate Thirty-first Division on the excellent work of the past two days, and wishes his appreciation to be conveyed to the troops." G.O.C. Thirty-first Division adds his congratulation and thanks.'

From G.O.C. 92nd Infantry Brigade, 1.10.18 :

'G.O.C. 92nd Infantry Brigade highly compliments 18th Durham Light Infantry on their fighting powers, endurance, and excellent work during the six days that they have been attached to his Brigade, and to thank them heartily for their co-operation.'

APPENDIX III

ROLL OF OFFICERS AND WARRANT OFFICERS ON HEADQUARTERS

(† signifies killed or died of wounds.)

Commanding Officers.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes, T.D.
Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. G. Carter, M.C.
Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cheyne.
Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Lowe, D.S.O., M.C.
Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Southampton.

Acting during Absence of Commanding Officers.

Major D. D. Anderson, M.C.
Major T. G. Gibson.
Major T. A. Headlam.
Major W. G. Hutchence.
Major D. E. Ince, M.C.
Major C. G. Killick, M.C.
†Major C. W. Tilly.
Major W. B. Twist.
Lieutenant-Colonel F. Walton, M.C.

Second in Command.

Major G. Barry-Drew, D.S.O.
Major J. C. Hartley, D.S.O.
Major W. G. Hutchence (acting).
Major D. E. Ince, M.C.

Major C. G. Killick, M.C. (acting).
Major W. D. Lowe, M.C.
†Major G. C. Roberts.
†Major C. W. Tilly.
Major F. T. Tristram.
Major G. White, M.C.

Adjutants.

†Second Lieutenant A. M. Freer, M.C.
Captain W. D. Lowe, M.C.
Lieutenant A. A. McConnell, M.C.
†Captain G. C. Roberts.
Captain F. G. Stone.
Captain J. L. Thorman.
Captain R. R. Turnbull, M.C.

Quartermasters.

Lieutenant J. H. Chaplin.
Captain F. A. Flin.
Second Lieutenant W. L. Henderson, M.C.
Second Lieutenant J. Parke, D.F.C.
Captain W. T. Richardson.
Lieutenant R. Robson.
Lieutenant T. Wilson.

Transport Officers.

Captain F. S. Beadson, M.C.
Captain W. L. Oldfield.

Medical Officers.

Captain W. Bain, R.A.M.C.
Captain F. P. Evers, R.A.M.C.
Lieutenant J. W. Macfarlane, M.C., R.A.M.C
Lieutenant R. R. McHenry, M.C., M.O.R.C.
Lieutenant L. G. Moore, M.O.R.C.
†Lieutenant A. S. Taylor, R.A.M.C.
Captain E. A. Upcott Gill, R.A.M.C.

Regimental Sergeant-Majors.

W. L. Allen (acting).
W. T. Benneworth, D.C.M.
F. J. Carnell.
J. H. Chaplin.
J. Lock.
G. H. Meakin (acting).
E. Oldridge, D.C.M.

Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeants.

J. H. Chaplin.
W. Hall, M.S.M.
T. A. Needham, M.M.
L. Oliphant, M.S.M.
A. Smith.
T. Wilson.

APPENDIX IV

ROLL OF OFFICERS

The first rank shown is that in which the officer joined the Battalion; the second rank is the highest, temporary or acting, to which he was promoted. The last column shows special appointments outside the Battalion.

(† signifies killed or died of wounds. * Though posted to, did not join the Battalion.)
o. Original officers.

	Second Lieutenant J. ADAMS.		
	Second Lieutenant C. ADAMSON . . .	Lieutenant.	Brigade Intelligence Officer.
	Second Lieutenant W. R. AGAR . . .	Lieutenant.	2nd/6th Durham Light Infantry.
	*Second Lieutenant R. T. AITKENHEAD.		
	Second Lieutenant W. ALLBEURY, M.C. .	Lieutenant.	Royal Army Ordnance Corps.
	Major D. D. ANDERSON, M.C. . . .	A/Second in Command.	
	Second Lieutenant A. W. APPERLEY . .		Lieutenant, Royal Engineers.
o.	Lieutenant W. W. APPERLEY . . .	Signalling Officer.	
	Second Lieutenant R. A. APPLETON.		
	Second Lieutenant R. ARMSTRONG . .	Captain.	
	Second Lieutenant A. P. ASHLEY . . .	Lieutenant. Signalling Officer.	
	Second Lieutenant R. H. ATKINSON . .		Special Brigade Royal Engineers.

Lieutenant G. AUTEN, M.C.		Machine-Gun Corps.
Second Lieutenant C. N. BAILDON.		
Second Lieutenant A. BAILES.		
Second Lieutenant R. A. BARRY . . .		2nd/6th Durham Light Infantry.
Major G. BARRY-DREW, D.S.O. . . .	Second in Command.	Lieut.-Colonel, Eighth Corps School.
o. Lieutenant F. S. BEADON, M.C. . . .	Transport Officer. / Captain.	D.A.P.M., Second Army.
†Second Lieutenant W. BELL.		
†Second Lieutenant F. BLENKINSOP, M.C. .		Lieutenant.
†Second Lieutenant S. F. BOBBY . . .		93rd Light Trench Mortar Battery.
o. Second Lieutenant J. A. V. BODDY . .	Lieutenant.	Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant J. M. BOOTH . . .	Signalling Officer.	
Lieutenant F. S. BOOTIMAN	Captain.	
Lieutenant A. BORRELL	Captain.	2nd/6th Durham Light Infantry.
*Second Lieutenant H. BOWER.		
o. Lieutenant-Colonel H. BOWES, T.D. . .		Cmdg. 1st G/Battn. K.O.Y.L.I.
†Second Lieutenant J. B. BRADFORD, M.C.		
Second Lieutenant H. BROSTOW, M.M.		
Captain F. D. BROWN.		
*Second Lieutenant G. C. BROWN.		

†Second Lieutenant W. H. Brown.		
Second Lieutenant E. R. Bryson.		
Second Lieutenant C. H. Bulmer.		
o. †Lieutenant R. Burdon	Captain.	Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant C. W. Burnip.		
†Second Lieutenant R. G. C. Busby.		
Second Lieutenant T. Bushell . . .		Captain, Reception Camp.
*Second Lieutenant B. Cach.		
Second Lieutenant A. A. Campbell.		
Second Lieutenant E. R. Callender . .	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant J. W. Carroll, M.C.		Lieutenant, Royal Air Force.
†Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. G. Carter, M.C.		B.E.F. in Russia.
Lieutenant and Q.M. J. H. Chaplin.		
Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cheyne . . .		Cmdg. 4th Shropshire Light Infantry.
o. Second Lieutenant H. J. Clark . . .	Lieutenant.	A.D.C., 93rd Infantry Brigade.
Second Lieutenant R. D. Colbeck.		
Second Lieutenant Q.M. Cooper.		
Second Lieutenant A. Crierie . . .	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant E. O. Cutter . . .		Lieutenant.
o. Second Lieutenant W. R. Darwin . .	Captain.	Field Survey Company R.E.
Second Lieutenant W. J. M. Dennis.		
Second Lieutenant L. A. Dick . . .	Captain.	

APPENDIX IV—*continued.*

*Second Lieutenant H. J. Ditcham.		
Second Lieutenant H. J. Dodds . . .		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant T. W. Dormand . .	Captain.	
*Second Lieutenant T. G. Druery . .		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant J. N. Dugdale . .		Lieutenant, Royal Air Force.
*Second Lieutenant T. E. Eade.		
Second Lieutenant E. Embleton.		
Captain A. J. Evan-Smith		Major, 3rd Durham Light Infantry.
Second Lieutenant A. Everatt, M.C. .	Captain.	
Lieutenant H. Fawcett, M.C. . . .		Captain, 2nd/6th Durham Light Infantry.
o. Second Lieutenant W. Fenwick . . .	Lieutenant.	Staff Captain, Nineteenth Corps.
Second Lieutenant J. A. Ferguson.		
Second Lieutenant C. G. Findlay . .	Lieutenant. Signalling Officer.	
Second Lieutenant O. G. Fletcher.		
Second Lieutenant F. A. Flin . . .	Captain. Quartermaster.	
Second Lieutenant J. F. M. Floyd . .		Captain, Machine-Gun Corps.
*Second Lieutenant W. Forster, M.C. .		Lieutenant, 9th Durham Light Infantry.
*Second Lieutenant E. Frankland.		
†Second Lieutenant A. M. Freer, M.C. .	Adjutant.	
Major T. G. Gibson	A/in Command.	

Captain F. J. Gilbertson.		
o. Captain M. P. Griffith-Jones . . .		Major, D.J.A.G.
*Second Lieutenant L. V. Haigh.		
Second Lieutenant H. H. Halford-Adcock		Captain, 93rd Infantry Brigade.
o. Second Lieutenant T. M. Harbottle, M.C.	Lieutenant.	Captain, Field Survey Company, R.E.
o. Lieutenant J. R. Harraton.		
Major J. C. Hartley, D.S.O. . . .	A/Second in Command.	Lieutenant-Colonel, Royal Fusiliers.
o. Second Lieutenant H. W. Hawdon . .	Lieutenant.	Captain, 1st G/Battn. K.O.Y.L.I.
Major T. A. Headlam	A/in Command.	Lieutenant-Colonel, East Yorkshire Regt.
Second Lieutenant W. L. Henderson, M.C.	A/Quartermaster.	
Second Lieutenant R. M. Hill . . .	Signalling Officer.	Captain, Special Brigade R.E.
Second Lieutenant W. L. Hilton . .	Lieutenant. Signalling Officer.	
Second Lieutenant H. E. Hitchin, D.S.O., M.C., M.M.	Major.	
Lieutenant J. F. Hobson, M.C. . . .	Captain.	
Second Lieutenant C. M. Hornsby . .	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant G. C. Hudson . . .	Lieutenant.	Labour Corps.
o. †Captain J. B. Hughes-Games, M.C.		
†Second Lieutenant R. T. H. Hunt.		
o. Captain W. G. Hutchence	Major. A/in Command.	Fifth Army School.
o. Lieutenant D. E. Ince, M.C. . . .	Major. Second in Command. A/in Command.	

APPENDIX IV—*continued.*

†Second Lieutenant J. W. Ineson.		
o. Captain J. P. Kayll		Major, Machine-Gun Corps.
†Second Lieutenant D. H. Keith.		
o. Second Lieutenant C. G. Killick, M.C.	Major. A/in Command.	
Second Lieutenant R. W. Langley		2nd/6th Durham Light Infantry.
Second Lieutenant G. H. Lean	Lieutenant.	
*Second Lieutenant E. E. Lee.		
†Second Lieutenant J. Long, M.M.		
Captain J. M. Longden		Lieut.-Col., 13th Durham Light Infantry.
o. Captain W. D. Lowe, D.S.O., M.C.	Adjut. Second in Command. Lieutenant-Colonel.	Lieut.-Col., 11th East Lancashire Regt.
Second Lieutenant J. Mack		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant D. McCarthy		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant A. A. McConnell, M.C.	Adjutant. Captain.	Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant T. Monckton.		
†Second Lieutenant G. H. K. Money.		
Lieutenant A. Neal, D.C.M.	Captain.	Reception Camp.

o. Major P. G. Nevile.			
Second Lieutenant J. H. Nicholson.			
*Second Lieutenant A. R. B. Noble, M.C.			
Second Lieutenant W. L. Oldfield . .	Captain.	Transport Officer.	
o. Lieutenant E. W. Ormston, D.S.O. . .			Major, Royal Engineers.
Second Lieutenant J. Parke, D.F.C. . .	Lieutenant.	Quartermaster.	Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant J. Pattison . . .	Lieutenant.		
†Second Lieutenant L. Peart.			
o. Lieutenant G. Peirson, D.S.O., M.C. .	Captain.		Brigade-Major.
Second Lieutenant J. G. Perry, M.C.			
†Second Lieutenant D. E. Phorson . .	Captain.		
†Second Lieutenant G. Player.			
Second Lieutenant W. E. Potter.			
Second Lieutenant F. C. Prickett, M.C.			Captain, 93rd Light Trench Mortar Bat.
Second Lieutenant C. C. Priestman . .	Lieutenant.		Royal Army Ordnance Corps.
*Second Lieutenant R. P. Proud.			
*Second Lieutenant T. R. Purcifer.			
†Second Lieutenant G. K. Raine.			
Second Lieutenant H. E. Raine, M.C. .			Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant H. E. Ranson . . .			Lieutenant, Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant R. C. Reay.			

APPENDIX IV—*continued.*

Second Lieutenant N. Richardson	Captain.	
*Second Lieutenant T. W. Richardson		Machine-Gun Corps.
Lieutenant and Q.M. W. T. Richardson	Captain.	
Second Lieutenant C. L. Riley	Lieutenant.	Indian Army.
Second Lieutenant G. H. Riley	Lieutenant.	
o. Second Lieutenant B. S. Roberts		Captain.
o. †Captain G. C. Roberts	Adjutant. Major. Second in Command.	Lieut.-Col., 14th Gloucestershire Regt.
o. Second Lieutenant F. H. Robinson	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant F. P. Robson	Captain.	
o. Lieutenant and Q.M. R. Robson		Captain, 16th Durham Light Infantry.
Second Lieutenant E. W. Rowlands, M.C.	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant J. H. Ruby		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant R. W. Scurfield.		
Second Lieutenant H. Seymour		Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant T. W. Shield.		
Second Lieutenant E. B. Shields	Captain.	Army School of Instruction.
†Second Lieutenant G. Simpson	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant C. H. Skardon		Lieutenant, General List.
*Second Lieutenant D. K. Smith.		
o. Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Southampton.		Cmdg. 4th Yorkshire Regt.
Captain G. B. Stafford		

Second Lieutenant F. G. Stone . . .	Adjutant. Captain.	
o. Second Lieutenant H. W. Tait . . .	Lieutenant.	Royal Air Force.
Second Lieutenant C. M. Thompson.		
†Second Lieutenant E. Thompson.		
Second Lieutenant J. L. Thorman . .	Adjutant. Captain.	Special Brigade, R.E.
o. †Major C. W. Tilly	Second in Command. A/ in Command.	Lieut.-Col., 15th West Yorkshire Regt.
o. Major F. T. Tristram	Second in Command.	Lieut.-Col., Sherwood Foresters.
Second Lieutenant G. W. Tucker, D.C.M.		
Second Lieutenant R. R. Turnbull, M.C.	Adjutant. Captain.	
Second Lieutenant A. N. Turner . .		Lieutenant, Royal Air Force.
*Second Lieutenant W. H. T. Turner.		
Captain W. B. Twist	Major. A/in Command.	Eighth Corps School.
Second Lieutenant J. E. Waggott . .	Lieutenant.	Captain, Thirteenth Corps.
*Second Lieutenant J. Wake.		
Lieutenant-Colonel F. Walton, M.C. .	A/in Command.	Lieut.-Col., 15th West Yorkshire Regt.
Second Lieutenant J. M. Ward.		
o. Lieutenant L. C. Warmington . . .		Captain, Courts Martial Officer.
o. Captain A. H. Waton, M.C. . . .		Major. Brigade-Major.
Second Lieutenant E. T. Weddell, M.C..	Captain.	
o. Second Lieutenant C. L. Welford . .	Lieutenant.	
Second Lieutenant L. Welsh.		

APPENDIX IV—*continued.*

Second Lieutenant C. V. WHITE	Lieutenant, Labour Corps.
Major G. WHITE, M.C.	A/Second in Command.
Second Lieutenant E. O. S. WILEY	Lieutenant.
Second Lieutenant W. F. WILLSON	R.A.S.C.
Lieutenant and Quartermaster T. WILSON.	
†Second Lieutenant W. WILSON.	

APPENDIX V

LIST OF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN WHO LEFT THE BATTALION AFTER SERVICE IN FRANCE TO PROCEED TO ENGLAND FOR A COMMISSION

This list does not include those who left the Battalion for a Commission before it proceeded overseas.

Lance-Sergeant J. W. Agar.
C.S.M. W. L. Allen.
Sergeant A. P. Ashley.
Sergeant M. H. Aubin.
C.S.M. P. Balmer.
Sergeant W. Barker.
Sergeant J. E. Bell.
Sergeant R. G. Bird.
Sergeant A. Bradley.
L.-Corporal W. C. Carling.
Sergt.-Major J. H. Chaplin.
Sergeant J. J. Christison.
Sergeant A. Crierie.
L.-Corporal T. Darling.
Sergeant W. Dickinson.
Corporal W. J. Dodsworth.
L.-Corporal G. V. Duckett.
Sergeant G. Dyer.
Sergeant D. E. Ellwood.
Private L. Ellwood.
Sergeant C. Farrar.
L.-Sergeant H. V. Ferrier.
Corporal A. Frazer.
C.S.M. A. M. Freer.
Sergeant J. C. Gill.
Private W. Hall.
Sergeant G. Hanson.
Sergeant E. M. Hart.
C.S.M. W. Hourie.
Private T. E. Howl.
Private C. W. Jackson.
Sergeant G. H. Jacob.
Lance-Corporal G. Kitching
Corporal A. H. Lake.
Private F. Lattimer.
Corporal W. H. Lawer.
L.-Sergeant G. C. Lawson.
Private J. Lindsay.
L.-Corporal G. R. Marshall.
L.-Corporal A. S. Merriweather.
Corporal R. Moses.
Corporal H. Murray.
L.-Corporal W. Osborne.
Sergeant J. Parke.
Sergeant D. L. Pearson.

Corporal L. Peart.
Sergeant R. Picken.
C.S.M. M. R. Pinkney.
Sergeant J. G. Potter.
Corporal F. Proudfoot.
Sergeant R. Railton.
L.-Corporal H. Routledge.
Sergeant N. Siddle.
Corporal J. H. Simmonds.
Sergeant J. A. Simpson.
Corporal F. H. Sinclair.
Private G. V. Smith.
Sergeant W. C. Speedy.
Sergeant H. Stanley.
Sergeant W. Stokoe.
Sergeant B. Stott.
Corporal J. Stubbs.
Private A. W. Summerbell.
Sergeant W. Tarran.
Sergeant C. Taylor.
Sergeant W. Taylor (B Coy.).
Sergeant W. Taylor (C Coy.).
Sergeant R. N. Thompson.
L.-Sergeant F. E. Turnbull.
Sergeant J. M. Ward.
Sergeant W. Watkin.
Sergeant A. Wear.
Private J. A. Williams.
Q.M.S. T. Wilson.
Sergeant S. R. Wyld.

APPENDIX VI

LIST OF DECORATIONS

Distinguished Service Order.

Lieutenant-Colonel R. Barry-Drew.
Major J. C. Hartley.
Second Lieutenant H. E. Hitchin, M.C., M.M.
Major W. D. Lowe, M.C.
Major E. W. Ormston.
Captain G. Peirson, M.C.

Second Bar to Military Cross.

Captain J. W. Macfarlane, M.C., R.A.M.C.

Bar to Military Cross.

Captain J. W. Macfarlane, M C., R.A.M.C.
Captain A. W. Summerbell, M.C.

Military Cross.

Second Lieutenant W. Allbeury.
Captain F. S. Beadon.
Second Lieutenant F. Blenkinsop.
Second Lieutenant J. B. Bradford.
Lieutenant J. W. Carroll.
Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. G. Carter.
Second Lieutenant A. Everatt.

Lieutenant H. Fawcett.
Lieutenant W. Forster.
Second Lieutenant A. M. Freer.
Captain T. M. Harbottle.
Second Lieutenant W. L. Henderson.
Second Lieutenant H. E. Hitchin, D.S.O., M.M.
Lieutenant J. F. Hobson.
Captain J. B. Hughes-Games.
Major D. E. Ince.
Major C. G. Killick.
Major W. D. Lowe.
Lieutenant J. W. Macfarlane, R.A.M.C.
Lieutenant A. A. McConnell.
Lieutenant R. R. McHenry, M.O.R.C.
Second Lieutenant A. R. B. Noble.
Captain G. Peirson.
Second Lieutenant J. G. Perry.
Captain F. C. Prickett.
Lieutenant H. E. Raine.
Second Lieutenant E. W. Rowlands.
Captain A. W. Summerbell.
Second Lieutenant R. R. Turnbull.
Captain A. H. Waton.
Captain E. T. Weddell.
Major G. White.

Distinguished Flying Cross.

Lieutenant J. Parke, R.A.F.

Mentioned in Despatches.

Captain F. S. Beadon.
Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes.
Lieutenant and Quartermaster J. H. Chaplin
Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Cheyne (twice).
Captain L. A. Dick.
Captain W. Fenwick.
Captain H. E. Hitchin.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Lowe (three times).
Captain L. C. Warmington.
Major A. H. Waton.

Territorial Decoration.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowes.

Foreign Decorations.

Lieutenant W. Allbeury, M.C., Croix de Guerre (Belgian).
Lieut.-Colonel H. Bowes, T.D., Chevalier Legion of Honour.
Captain L. A. Dick, Croix de Guerre (French).
Captain T. W. Dormand, Chevalier Legion of Honour.
Lieutenant A. Everatt, M.C., Croix de Guerre (French).
Major A. H. Waton, M.C., Croix de Guerre (French).

Thirty-first Divisional Decoration (also awarded to all recipients of British Decorations).

Captain R. Armstrong.
Lieutenant A. P. Ashley.
Captain A. Borrell.
Second Lieutenant A. Crierie.
Lieutenant F. A. Flin.
Captain W. L. Oldfield.
Captain W. T. Richardson.

Bar to Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Sergeant-Major E. Oldridge, D.C.M.

Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Private J. Atkinson.
Sergeant W. Barker.
C.S.M. W. T. Benneworth.
Private R. W. Cowling.
C.S.M. F. Curry.
C.S.M. B. Dolan.
Sergeant H. Goldsborough.
Sergeant I. Harbron.
Private W. Harper.
Corporal C. Lloyd.
Private H. Mitchell.
Captain A. Neal.
Sergt.-Major E. Oldridge.
Corporal M. R. Pinkney.
Sergeant E. C. Powell.
Sergeant W. Siddle.
Private A. A. Taylor.
Sergeant W. Teasdale.
Sec. Lieut. G. W. Tucker.
Corporal F. Wright.

THE 18TH DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

Second Bar to Military Medal.

Lance-Corporal T. Cook, M.M.

Bar to Military Medal.

Private T. Cook, M.M. Sergt. W. Dickinson, M.M.
Cpl. G. C. Lawson, M.M.

Military Medal.

Private W. Ainsley.
Private C. Anderson.
Corporal J. Aspin.
L.-Cpl. E. C. Bell.
Private H. Brailey.
Sec. Lieut. H. Brostow.
Sergeant O. Burdon.
Corporal W. Carrick.
Private O. Carroll.
Private T. Cook.
Private W. Curry.
L.-Cpl. T. Davison.
L.-Cpl. W. Dickinson.
L.-Cpl. J. Dunning.
Corporal C. G. Forster.
L.-Cpl. A. Frazer.
Private S. Gibson.
Private W. Grant.
Corporal G. E. Hawkins.
Sec. Lieut. H. E. Hitchin.
Private T. S. Hutchinson.
Private I. W. Iliffe.
Private G. H. Jacob.
Private J. W. Jobling.
L.-Cpl. J. Kennick.
Private F. King.
Private H. W. Lawer.
L.-Cpl. G. C. Lawson.
Sergeant E. R. Little.
L.-Cpl. J. Lockey.
Sec. Lieut. J. Long.
Private J. K. Mellor.
L.-Sergt. J. Milburn.
Private W. Nash.
C.Q.S. T. A. Needham.
Private F. Nelson.
Private S. Nesbitt.
Private F. Newcombe.
Private N. Ogle.
L.-Cpl. J. Ord.
Private A. Porter.
Private J. J. Potts.
L.-Cpl. J. Rand.
Private T. Reavley.
Private T. Reed.
Private W. J. Rigby.
L.-Cpl. T. Rigg.
L.-Cpl. S. Ryder.
Sergeant C. H. Sainte.
Private C. Slater.
Sergeant J. D. Smith.
Private T. W. Stansfield.
L.-Cpl. A. Stokes.
Private H. Taylor.
L.-Cpl. W. Taylor.
Private W. A. Taylor.
L.-Cpl. H. W. Thompson.
Private F. B. Thorpe.

Private R. Topping.
Private H. F. Towle.
L.-Cpl. J. H. Turnbull.
Private G. Turner.
Private T. R. Vockuich.
Private S. J. Walker.
Corporal F. G. White.
L.-Cpl. F. Willis.
Private J. Yoxall.

Meritorious Service Medal.

C.Q.S. A. W. Austin.
Corporal E. T. Bell.
A.Q.S. C. B. Boyce.
L.-Cpl. A. Clarke.
L.-Cpl. S. Clarke.
A.Q.S. A. G. Drummond.
Q.S. W. Hall.
Sergeant J. D. Moscrop.
Q.S. L. Oliphant.
L.-Sergt. L. H. Robinson.
Corporal T. W. Tindale.
Interpreter R. Toison.
C.Q.S. G. Whitehead.

Mentioned in Despatches.

Sergeant A. E. Atkin.
C.S.M. W. T. Benneworth.
A.Q.S. C. B. Boyce.
Sergeant O. Burdon.
Sergeant C. G. Dixon.
Sergeant W. C. Harrison.
Sergeant G. Horner.
Corporal J. Jackson.
Sergeant W. Mowbray.
C.S.M. W. A. Pearson.
Sergeant J. A. Simpson.
C.Q.S. H. L. Taylor.
Sergeant R. Walton.

Foreign Decorations.

Lance-Sergeant F. G. Allison, Croix de Guerre (French).
Corporal J. Aspin, Croix de Guerre (French).
Company Sergeant-Major W. T. Benneworth, Chevalier de l'Ordre Leopold II.
Private H. Brailey, Croix de Guerre (Belgian).
Lance-Corporal T. Cook, Croix de Guerre (French).
Private G. H. Jacob, Russian Order of St. George, 4th Class.
Private N. Ogle, Croix de Guerre (Belgian).
Company Sergeant-Major W. A. Pearson, Croix de Guerre (French).

Thirty-first Divisional Decoration (also awarded to all recipients of British Decorations).

Private T. Adams.
L.-Cpl. N. Bates.
L.-Cpl. J. W. Boyd.
Sergeant F. W. Bruce.
Private G. H. Buckley.
Private J. Carmody.
Private H. Carr.
L.-Cpl. F. Cartmell.
Private G. Chapman.
Private T. Cook.
Corporal B. Cornforth.
Sergeant G. Cummings.
Corporal J. B. Emmerson.
Corporal R. Gleadhill.
Private W. Goggins.
Private J. Hall.
Corporal W. J. P. Hall.
L.-Cpl. J. Harrison.
Private T. H. Harrison.
Sergeant W. C. Harrison.
Corporal W. Haw.
Sergeant F. Hunter.
Corporal W. Johnson.
Private W. Johnson.
Sergeant W. H. Johnson.
Corporal W. B. Linton.
Private S. Maskey.
Private J. Mitchell.
C.Q.S. W. Morgan.
Private W. Nicholson.
C.S.M. W. A. Pearson.
Private S. Rawlings.
Private T. H. Renton.
Private J. Scott.
Corporal G. W. Sellars.
Private J. W. Smith.
Corporal A. Stott.
C.Q.S. H. L. Taylor.
Private S. Weston.
Private W. Whitfield.
Corporal F. Wilson.
Sergeant T. Younger.

APPENDIX VII

CASUALTY LISTS

(*As compiled from Infantry Records, York.*)

I

Wounded (excluding all wounded who did not return to England but were treated in hospital in France: the numbers of the latter are not available: these are estimated at about 1900 additional casualties)	991
Wounded before capture	35[a]
	1026

II

Killed	495
Prisoners of War, died after capture	10[b]
Later reported killed	34[c]
Presumed killed	74[d]
	613

III

Prisoners of War (of whom at a minimum 35[a] had been wounded before capture and 10[b] died of wounds after capture)	90[e]

IV

Reported Missing (including 90[e] as in III., also 34[c] later reported killed in action and 74[d] presumed killed)	198

V

Escaped as Prisoner of War (included in III.) . .	2

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